

# THE VICTORY OF VENIZELOS

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VINCENT J. SELIGMAN

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The victory of  
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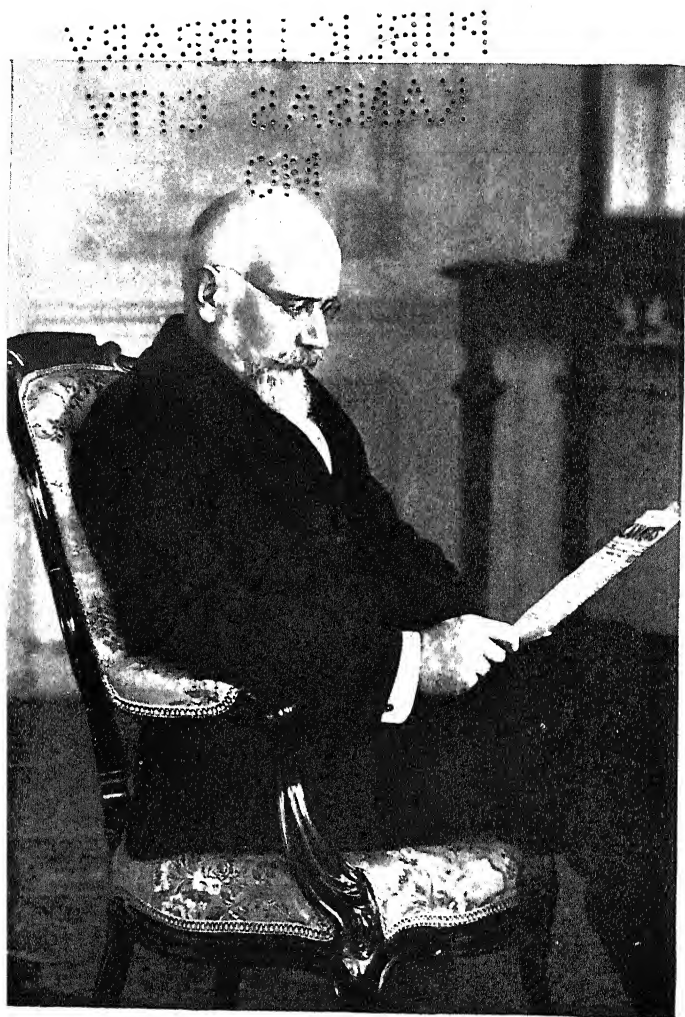
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# THE VICTORY OF VENIZELOS

A STUDY OF GREEK POLITICS, 1910-1918

BY

VINCENT J. SELIGMAN



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1920

THIS BOOK  
IS DEDICATED, WITH HIS KIND PERMISSION, TO  
HIS EXCELLENCY M. ELEUTHERIOS VENIZELOS,  
AS A SMALL TRIBUTE OF THE AUTHOR'S  
RESPECT AND ADMIRATION.





## FOREWORD

**D**URING the last few months it has become apparent that a skilfully conducted campaign, emanating from Headquarters in Switzerland, is being carried out, with London and New York as its chief objectives, to capture them and to persuade them that Greece's only hope of salvation lies in recovering her beloved Constantine. Not only have we been informed in countless interviews that Constantine was always devoted to the Entente, and that he has been cruelly misrepresented by his enemies, but it is also asserted that the Greek people, almost to a man, have grown tired of M. Venizelos, and are pining for the return of their former King.

A certain remote semblance of truth has been lent to these statements by a slight reaction in Greece itself, which has set in during the past months. But this reaction is not due to any unrequited longings of the people for Constantine; it is rather owing to that vague feeling of dissatisfaction and vexation which is the normal aftermath of war

and which even England has not escaped. Greece has her profiteers, Bolsheviks, and other nuisances, just as we have. But whereas England is beginning to settle down, Greece cannot do so ; for, owing to a variety of circumstances, peace has not yet been signed with Turkey. To-day, more than a year after the Armistice, she is still in a state of war, her Army is still mobilized, and not a single one of the national questions which concern her has been settled. It is hardly surprising in these circumstances that a certain reaction has set in. But when, last month, a dastardly attempt was made to murder M. Venizelos, the wave of horror which swept over the whole nation, and the universal thanksgivings that the plot had failed, indicated beyond a doubt what were Greece's real feelings.

I am well aware that anyone who gets mixed up in Greek politics does so at his peril. It is only because, after very careful study of both sides of the question, and after hearing the views not only of leading ' Venizelists ' and ' Constantinians,' but also of Englishmen and English women, who were in Athens during the War, and who have an intimate knowledge of Greek politics ; it is only because I have become convinced that the return of Constantine would constitute a national disaster for Greece,

that I have embarked on this perilous adventure. If I can contribute by this book, even in a small way, to the enlightenment of the public, I shall be fully rewarded.

VINCENT J. SELIGMAN.

LONDON,

*January, 1920.*



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## PART I





## CHAPTER I

# VENIZELOS AND THE BALKAN WARS

(1910—1914)

A GREAT deal of nonsense has been talked about Greece's 'duty' to intervene at the beginning of the War on the side of the Entente, as though Greece were bound by past favours received from the Protecting Powers to rush to their assistance, regardless of her own interests. Examples of such altruistic policy are unfortunately rare in history; and if we begin by assuming that Venizelos' policy was primarily pro-Entente, we shall start with a fundamental misconception of the whole trend of Greek politics. Similarly many, but not all, of those who have been labelled 'pro-German' with a facile stroke of the pen, were not pro-German at all. Both Venizelos and the majority of his opponents were primarily pro-Greek; and incidentally, according as they believed the true interests of Greece would be best served, they favoured either intervention on the side of the Entente or a neutrality beneficent to German interests. But it is absurd to talk of treachery to the Entente. Greece, as an independent Power, was entitled to act as she chose. It is true that treachery came

later ; but the country betrayed was Serbia. Finally Greece herself was betrayed by her own rulers, who abandoned a national for a purely Germanic policy. With that I will deal later : for the present I only wish to emphasize that at the beginning every Greek politician, with the possible exception of M. Streit, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, was neither pro-Entente nor pro-German, but pro-Greek.

It is impossible to understand the policy of Venizelos at the beginning of the War, unless we have some knowledge of the part he played during the previous years. In a broader sense it may be said that the Great European War was not an isolated event in the Balkans, but rather a consummation of the two Balkan Wars which preceded it. To study the first without a knowledge of the second would be to witness the last act of a drama without witnessing the first. The alliances and enmities formed in 1912 and 1913 had a profound influence on the alliances and enmities which were formed in 1914 and 1915 : the one gives us the key to the other. I propose, therefore, to give a slight sketch of the two Balkan Wars, with special reference to the policy followed by Venizelos.

With the regeneration of Greece in 1910 the idea, long conceived but hitherto rendered impossible by mutual jealousies, of forming a Pan-Balkan Alliance against Turkey, definitely began to take shape. It was in that same year, 1910, that

Venizelos, after his successful revolution in Crete, came to Athens and became leader of the Liberal party and President of the Council of Ministers, or, as it will be more convenient in the future to call him, Prime Minister. That he was the founder of the Balkan League is universally admitted even by his enemies. But although he succeeded in uniting the conflicting claims, and in killing the mutual suspicions of Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece, he was by no means in a hurry to use the weapon he had forged. His enemies have represented him almost in the same breath as a Bernhardi and as a pacifist : the truth is that he was neither the one nor the other. He hoped that the intolerable grievances under which the Balkan States were labouring might be set right by the very threat of combined action on the part of the three kingdoms. But if the threat did not suffice, he was quite prepared to resort to extreme measures.

As far as Greece was concerned the threat was sufficient. In 1912 Greece might have arrived at an actual settlement of the most burning question of all which was at issue between herself and Turkey—that of Crete. But her other Allies, Bulgaria and Serbia, had decided on war ; and in the circumstances Greece could not possibly remain a passive spectator. The War ended in a victory for the Balkan States ; and Turkey was compelled to surrender a large slice of territory to the three combatants. But the Great Powers stepped in and prevented the march on

Constantinople, which from a military point of view was doomed.

At this point it is necessary to say something about the attitude of the Great Powers during the First War. Broadly speaking we may say that England, France, and Russia supported the just claims of the Balkan Allies, though they were not prepared to see Turkey altogether dismembered. Russia in particular was more directly interested in Balkan affairs than either England or France. The last two countries were naturally in favour of the emancipation from the Turkish yoke of the Christian Greeks and Slavs, and were, moreover, further prejudiced in their favour by the apparent inequality of the contest, and extended the traditional support to David against Goliath. Russia, whose propinquity to the scene of action gave her a more vivid and less academic interest in the War, was bound to the Balkan Allies by two further bonds. Firstly, two of the Allies, Serbia and Bulgaria, were Slav races, and she was united to them by ties of blood : or, if we wish to put it from the utilitarian point of view, it was in her interests to support the Slav against the Teuton. The second reason was that this coalition of Balkan States, independently of little moment, formed when united a very important factor in the European situation. The probability of Austro-German aggression in the near future became more and more apparent to Russia ; and the knowledge that an army of nearly a million men would almost certainly come to her

assistance from the Balkan States in the event of war naturally led her to support them in their struggle for independence. She made only one reserve : on no account must the Balkan States lay a finger on Constantinople. For more than a century Russia had coveted this outlet : and she was not prepared to see it fall into the hands of the Greeks or the Bulgars. In a word, the policy of the Entente during the First Balkan War was to assist the Allies whilst at the same time trying to moderate their claims ; and, above all, to keep them united.

The policy of Austria and Germany was diametrically opposed to that of the Entente. Austria detested the Slav races : for Serbia in particular, ever since she herself had annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina, she felt that particular hatred and fear which always inspire Robber-States to attack those they have robbed. Austria knew well that hers was a ramshackle Empire, built up by successful royal marriages and by a ruthless policy of *Divide et impera* : and she feared that a coalition of her Balkan enemies might well destroy the unstable edifice. Moreover, she had for many years gazed with covetous eyes on Macedonia with its great port of Salonica : and she could not tolerate the idea that the spoil which she coveted should fall into the hands of her enemies.

Germany supported Austria in everything, and in addition had been drawing closer and closer to Turkey in the last few years. The Kaiser had

paid his famous visit, had become a Mohammedan for the time being, and had made his absurd entry into Jerusalem. Under cover of this empty and spectacular show, she had been carrying on the serious work of the Germanization of the Turk. Turkey's Army had been reorganized by German officers : and everything conceivable had been done to prepare an efficient and friendly Turkey for ' the day ' when the World-War should begin. Consequently, when the Turkish Army was badly defeated, the Kaiser, owing to his natural sympathy for Austria, was doubly mortified at his failure to secure the efficiency of his future Ally.

We get a clear idea of German relations with Greece from the correspondence which passed between the two countries after the First, and before the Second, Balkan War. At the suggestion of Venizelos, who, however, made it clear that in return for the temporary support of Germany he had no intention of abandoning the Entente and adopting a Germanophile policy, Constantine (who had just come to the throne on March 18, 1913, after the tragic assassination of his father) sounded his brother-in-law on his disposition towards Greece. At that time the question of the Turkish Islands was still pending, the question of Epirus was unsettled, as was also the difference with Bulgaria, which later led to war. Was Germany prepared to support Greek claims ? The reply of the Kaiser was outspoken. Regarding the question of the boundaries of Epirus he referred

the King to his Allies, Austria and Italy ! (It was on account of the interference of these very two countries that Greek claims had been opposed.) As to the Bulgarian frontier, he clearly and categorically stated that he was quite unable to accept any responsibility in matters which might lead to war with Bulgaria, a war in which he had not the slightest inclination of taking part for the sake of Greece ; and as to the islands, Greece was brutally and bluntly told that she had no cause to intermeddle with the question, as they belonged to those who were masters of Asia Minor—that is, to the Turks. Such, then, was the enlightenment supplied by Berlin : that Greece might expect no support from Germany either as against Bulgaria, or Turkey, or Austria.

We turn now to the Second Balkan War and the causes which led up to it. After the defeat of Turkey, Bulgaria, who had had a large but not overwhelming share in the joint victory, suddenly assumed an overweening attitude, and informed her Allies that as she had practically won the War by her own efforts, she was entitled to a far greater portion of territory than she had hitherto claimed. Bulgarian arrogance is a byword in the Balkans : and on this occasion there can be no possible doubt that Germany and Austria, who wished at all costs to dissolve the Balkan coalition, were deliberately encouraging her to put forward extravagant claims. The situation for Greece particularly was extremely menacing. Thanks to the stupidity of Constantine, some

Bulgarians had been admitted into Salonica a few days after its capture by the Greeks on October 26, 1912. Having obtained admission for a few men on the pretext that the heir to the Bulgarian throne had passed all night under some bridge outside the town in the rain, the Bulgars had gradually in the last few months brought a whole division into the town. Moreover, throughout Macedonia, wherever they were encamped side by side with the Greeks, the Bulgars were becoming more and more threatening and small skirmishes between the two 'Allies' were of daily occurrence.

In view of the danger Venizelos took immediate steps to secure the help of Serbia, in case of Bulgarian aggression. Negotiations were opened on May 5th, and on June 1, 1913, the famous Greco-Serb Treaty of Alliance was signed. I shall have more to say about it later; for the present it is sufficient to state that Greece and Serbia promised each other mutual assistance in the event of either being attacked by a third Power.

But although he took the necessary precautions, Venizelos never wished for the Second War. Indeed, his opponents in the House actually attacked him for wishing to avoid it. In this respect he was in agreement with Constantine and the Greek General Staff, who considered that the chances of victory, even with Serbian co-operation, were little more than half. It must be borne in mind that the Bulgarian Army was far superior numerically to that of either



Greece or Serbia, and would, moreover, enjoy the advantage of fighting on interior lines. Clearly no responsible Minister would hurry into a war with so small a margin of prospective success in his favour, unless the provocation were indeed intolerable. Moreover, there was also the danger (a very real one, as subsequent disclosures in the Italian Chamber proved) of Austrian intervention on Bulgaria's side.

But all attempts at conciliation proved fruitless. Even before the signing of the defensive treaty, Bulgaria had commenced hostilities in a small way against the Greek troops near Mount Pangaeus ; and on June 29th she fell on Serbia and Greece with all her forces, without having even declared war. Thus began the Second Balkan War, which resulted in the complete defeat of Bulgaria.

This war need not detain us long, though its results are important, as the future alliances and enmities in the Balkans, which were later destined to have an enormous influence on the course of events, began to crystallize. Just before the end, Roumania, who had hitherto held aloof from the fighting, invaded Bulgaria and seized part of the Dobrudja. King Carol immediately proposed an armistice, which Venizelos, in spite of the advice of the Greek General Staff, wishing to make certain of victory by the capture of Sofia, hastened to accept. In this he was justified both from a military and a diplomatic point of view. For the capture of Sofia would have been an extraordinarily difficult operation, and would

have entailed very heavy losses ; and on the other hand the readiness with which Greece agreed to stop further bloodshed won her golden opinions for her moderation among the Great Powers, besides securing her the goodwill of Roumania.

On the 10th of August the Treaty of Bucharest was signed. Bulgaria lost nearly all she had won from Turkey ; while Greece and Serbia both made considerable further gains of territory. Roumania retained the 'captured' Dobrudja, and Turkey regained a slice of Thrace, including the important town of Adrianople, which she had quietly seized while her neighbour's gaze was fixed elsewhere. I do not propose to discuss here the fairness or the unfairness of the treaty ; it is sufficient to note the consequences. Greece and Serbia were won over more securely than ever to the Entente, who had supported their claims throughout ; and, moreover, by the mutual assistance they had rendered to each other, they were bound more closely together than ever. Bulgaria was furious with every one : with the Entente for supporting her enemies ; with Austria and Germany, with Turkey, Roumania, Greece, and Serbia (but more particularly the latter), for having thwarted her "national aspirations." There is no hatred so deadly as fratricidal hatred : and it was morally certain that if the opportunity ever came for revenging herself on Serbia, she would take it, no matter with what "strange bedfellow" it proved necessary for her to ally herself. Roumania

resumed her sphinx-like impassivity, though flirting now with the Entente, now with the Central Empires. Turkey, satisfied to have regained something from the unexpected turn of the wheel, drifted on helplessly, relying more and more on Germany.

It is incontestable that Greece owed an enormous debt to Venizelos. She had almost doubled her territory, and now looked forward to a long period of peace in which to secure and consolidate what she had won. Venizelos once again showed that spirit of conciliation which with him goes hand in hand with a firm determination never to sacrifice any vital interests, by inserting in the first paragraph of the King's Speech the sentence that "Greece considers that she has realized her national programme almost in its entirety." Although, as he himself has stated, he had the widest views of the future of Hellenism, he was firmly of the opinion that the national interest required him to secure a long period of peace. The solution of other national questions he wished to postpone for a whole generation.

There is just one other incident which needs recording before concluding this chapter. On June 12, 1914, Venizelos, confronted with the persistent persecution of the Greek population in Asia Minor, consulted Serbia with a view to concerted action. Serbia replied that "she considered it her first duty to fulfil all the obligations of an Ally, resulting from the Treaty of Alliance," but begged Greece to avoid war if possible, as her Army had not yet recovered

from the two wars from which it had just emerged. At the same time she addressed a strong Note to Turkey concerning the disgraceful treatment of the Greeks in the Turkish Empire. Upon Turkey asking her what concern it was of hers, she replied, "What concerns my Ally, Greece, concerns me." This joint threat was sufficient to ensure, at any rate, a temporary amelioration of the situation; and on the 22nd of June, Greece expressed to the Serbian Government "her warm thanks for the steps which it has taken at Constantinople in regard to the persecution carried out in Turkey—a step which has once more proved the strength of our Alliance and the friendly bonds which unite the two peoples."

A month later the Great European War broke out.

## CHAPTER II

### THE FIRST PERIOD OF THE WAR

*(July 23, 1914—March 5, 1915)*

#### FROM THE OUTBREAK OF WAR TILL THE FIRST RESIGNATION OF VENIZELOS

THE outbreak of war came as a terrible blow to Greece, but it found her united. Venizelos was in Munich, waiting there for the arrival of the Turkish Minister in Brussels, with whom he was to negotiate concerning certain outstanding problems, when the news of Austria's ultimatum to Serbia (July 23rd) reached him. On the next day he received a request from the Serbian Government as to what would be Greece's attitude in the event of war. Venizelos replied immediately that in the event of war between Serbia and Austria it would be necessary for the Greek Government to have fuller information before she could determine what answer should be given. "But," the telegram continues,<sup>1</sup> "in the event of an attack on Serbia by Bulgaria, I am resolved to propose to His Majesty the King and the Royal Government that we oppose Bulgaria with all our forces, in order to relieve Serbia of any

<sup>1</sup> See Greek White Book No. 15.

fear of the Bulgarian danger, and to assure the maintenance of the Treaty of Bucharest."

The attitude of Greece was perfectly correct. Before she could intervene against Austria she had first to satisfy herself that Austria was the assailant, and then to decide in concert with Serbia on the best way of carrying out the treaty. There were three alternatives: either for Greece to declare war immediately on Austria and to move her Army up from Salonica on to the Danube: or to declare war on Austria, and keep her Army mobilized on the Bulgarian frontier: or, finally, to maintain her neutrality, to watch Bulgaria and to attack her at once should she move against Serbia, and to render Serbia every assistance by expediting supplies and munitions from Salonica. Of these the first would have been madness; for it would have given the Bulgarians the heaven-sent opportunity of crossing the undefended frontier and of cutting the Greek and Serb communications with the sea. The second would have almost certainly precipitated Bulgaria's entry into the war against them. The third alternative was then the only possible one. Accordingly Greece, with the full approval of her Ally, Serbia, announced that she would remain neutral for the present; but that in the event of Bulgaria attacking her Ally she would come at once to her assistance. It is most important to note that Greece had consulted her Ally and received her approval as to the course to be pursued by her, in view of the subsequent

allegations of the Royalists, with which I will deal later, that Venizelos himself had broken the treaty.

Whilst the Prime Minister, with the approval of the country and also the apparent approval of the King, was carrying out his treaty obligations, the King, without consulting his Prime Minister, sent the following message (August 7th) to the Kaiser:

“The Emperor knows that my personal sympathies and my political opinions draw me to his side. . . . After deep reflection it is, however, impossible for me to see how I could be of service to him by mobilizing at once my Army. . . . I am forced to think that neutrality is imposed on us, which may be useful to him, and I assure him that I will not touch any of my neighbours who are his friends, as long as they do not touch our local Balkan interests.

“CONSTANTINE.”<sup>1</sup>

This message needs little comment: but we may note that it is the reply to a Note from the Kaiser; <sup>2</sup> asking Constantine to join hands with him against Slavism; assuring him that Bulgaria, Turkey, and Roumania were coming in too; warning him that if Greece did not join Germany, Germany would break with her; and concluding with the remark that “What I ask for to-day is to put into execution that which we have so often discussed

<sup>1</sup> White Book No. 21.

<sup>2</sup> White Book No. 19.

together." It would be interesting to know the exact nature of these discussions !

But the firm attitude of Venizelos and of the Greek people was sufficient, in spite of Constantine's assurances of neutrality, to restrain Bulgaria : and a few days later the Bulgarian Government dropped their bellicose attitude and returned to the strait and narrow path of neutrality, from which they were not to depart till fourteen months later.

But for Greece there was another and more imminent danger than the possibility of an attack by Bulgaria on Serbia. Turkey had not yet come in on Germany's side : but her Navy had been reinforced by the *Goeben* and the *Breslau*, and England had not yet effected the seizure of the *Sultan Selim*, a ship which was being constructed in the English dockyards, and which was to be delivered to Turkey in November. Against these, the Greek Navy could only oppose two American battleships of doubtful value, the purchase of which had been opposed by Admiral Mark Kerr who had been sent out before the war at the request of the Greek Government to reorganize their Navy. Thus the balance of naval power was, or rather would be shortly, turned definitely against Greece. The danger was terrible ; for at any moment Turkey and Bulgaria might arrive at an understanding, and take advantage of the European complications, to fall upon Greece and divide her rich territories.



For Venizelos there was only one solution: for Greece to throw herself unreservedly on the side of the Entente. But there were other, cogent reasons which led him to take this step. First there was the geographical position of Greece. As Venizelos himself remarked, "One cannot kick against geography." The extended seaboard of Greece, with all the biggest towns situated on the coast, and the large number of Greek islands, practically forced her on to the side of the Entente. As Greece was to learn later on, the Anglo-French control of the Mediterranean made it possible for us, without firing a shot, to bring Greece to her knees by the simple proclamation of a blockade. There was, of course, no question of doing so at that time; but, as already stated, Venizelos was not blind to the significance of geography. Secondly, there was the danger of Bulgarian expansion. In 1913 Bulgaria had committed tremendous blunders; and she had paid the penalty. But would she be so foolish again? If she joined the Central Empires, and they were victorious, she would receive an enormous increase of territory. If she took arms on the side of the Entente, and they were victorious, she would be richly rewarded. Even if she remained neutral, she could make sure of concessions from Serbia, who had already offered her the left bank of the Vardar as the price of her neutrality, and gains at Turkey's expense in the event of an Entente victory. What was Greece to do under these cir-

cumstances? She had no objection to a small expansion of Bulgaria; but she could not permit the Balance of Power created at Bucharest to be disturbed. Clearly then Greece's only chance was to forestall Bulgaria and to intervene on the side of the Entente. There was no question of intervention on the side of Germany: and by remaining neutral, she could have no voice in the Peace Conference, whichever group gained the victory. There was one, and only one combination of events which could bring about the downfall of Greece under these conditions—that is, if Bulgaria sided with the Central Empires and the Entente were defeated. But in that event Greece would be little better situated, if she remained neutral. Moreover, from the beginning of the War till the very end, Venizelos never doubted the ultimate victory of the Entente.

Accordingly, on the 28th of August, he asked for and obtained the King's authorization to declare that Greece understood that her place was at the side of the Entente: that although owing to the Bulgarian danger she was unable to reinforce Serbia, much less to send an expeditionary force to France, nevertheless she thought it her duty to declare to the Entente that, if Turkey went to war against them, she placed all her naval and military forces at the disposal of the Entente, providing that she was guaranteed against the Bulgarian danger.

It is worthy of note that this declaration was made

before the battle of the Marne, at a time when the capture of Paris seemed imminent : and that Venizelos made no bargain with the Entente as to the recompense which Greece should receive for participation in the war against Turkey. In this Venizelos showed extraordinary astuteness ; and he did not have to wait long for his recompense. The first reward was the promise of the English Government, even before Turkey had abandoned her neutrality, that the British Navy would not permit the Turkish Fleet to leave the Dardanelles even for the specific object of attacking Greece ; the second the permission granted to the Greek troops to re-occupy northern Epirus without prejudice to the future settlement of the Albanian question. Finally, England began to think seriously of offering Cyprus to Greece—an offer actually made a little later, and rejected by the Zaimes Government.

A few days later Constantine changed his mind : and proceeded to undo the work of Venizelos. He had given his authorization to the Prime Minister's declaration, and had at the time been fully persuaded as to its wisdom. But later he had reopened the question with General Dousmanes, the Chief of Staff, and Streit, the Foreign Secretary, who both questioned the wisdom of handing oneself over to the Entente. Whether or not Constantine had been deliberately fooling Venizelos I shall discuss later when I come to estimate his character, but provisionally we may accept the explanation that

he had changed his mind. It cannot be true, however, that he had forgotten his previous decision, as he had received a personal wire from the King of England a few days later, expressing his gratitude that Greece had not hesitated at such a critical moment to take her stand by the side of England. A week after the receipt of this wire Admiral Mark Kerr received instructions from the British Admiralty to get into touch with the Greek General Staff, and to study the possibilities of an attack on the Gallipoli peninsula. Our Admiral went straight to the King, who received him with great friendliness and placed at his disposal an exceedingly clever plan of attack drawn up by Colonel Metaxas. "But," added the King, "although I believe Mr. Venizelos feels very strongly about this matter, I only agree with him to this extent: that, if Turkey declares war against us, and you want to help us, I will accept your help." This was a flat contradiction of Greece's previous declaration: and Admiral Mark Kerr asked the King if he would allow him to communicate these remarks to the British Government as definitive. The King thereupon replied that he had to submit the telegram to Venizelos for approval. Naturally, when the latter read it, he was dismayed, and in a letter addressed to the King placed his resignation in his hands.<sup>1</sup> In addition to arguments previously advanced, Venizelos called attention to two facts:

<sup>1</sup> See letter of September 7, 1914, White Book I, No. 6.

the sinister and unconstitutional influence exercised over the King's mind by M. Streit, and the open declaration of Germany that, in the event of Bulgarian participation in the conflict on her side, she would support the creation of a "Greater Bulgaria" to serve as a bulwark against Slavism. With regard to M. Streit it may be mentioned (though this was not discovered till later) that it was he who had drafted the famous letter of August 7th to the Kaiser; and he had, moreover, been dismissed before by Venizelos for a breach of faith in communicating direct with the King without the knowledge of his chief, and had only been reinstated at the King's urgent personal request.

Fortunately the Premier's threat of resignation was sufficient to bring the King to his senses. The unfortunate telegram was destroyed; and a short time afterwards Streit left the Ministry owing to a further breach of faith. But the incident left behind two unpleasant consequences. Firstly, the Entente began to grow suspicious of the King; and secondly, our Admiralty, by contemptuously rejecting the plan of Metaxas, which—I have been told by a first-rate authority—was far better than the plan eventually adopted, created an implacable enemy. We shall hear more of Metaxas later.

Not long after this the Entente again turned its eyes towards the Balkans with a view to concerted action against Turkey. Venizelos received with

joy the announcement of Sir Edward Grey that in return for her co-operation she would receive "very important concessions in Asia Minor." The offer was a trifle vague : but it seemed clear that Greece would receive the coveted town of Smyrna with its huge population of Greeks and the hinterland which goes with the town. When we consider the giant strides made by Greece in the last few years and the enormous possibilities opened up by this new offer, we should hardly feel surprised if for a moment Venizelos' head had been turned. But with characteristic caution he insisted that Greece must be protected from a Bulgarian assault.

First he endeavoured to secure the co-operation of Roumania ; but Roumania would not take the plunge. Then he turned to Bulgaria : but it was soon evident that Bulgaria would not co-operate, unless Greece, as well as Serbia, was prepared to make concessions to her. At this point Venizelos found himself face to face with an unpleasant necessity : but he did not flinch. In a secret memorandum to the King, which was afterwards published by Gounares in order to throw discredit on him, he suggested that the provinces of Drama and Kavalla should be ceded to Bulgaria, as the price of her co-operation. When we consider that by sacrificing this territory he would obtain much greater compensation in Asia Minor, the proposed concession does not appear to have been unreasonable, though disadvantageous. It must be remembered that the provinces of Drama

and Kavalla were contiguous to Bulgarian territory, whereas Smyrna was a long way away. On the whole Greece would have gained little, if anything at all, by the bargain : but Venizelos foresaw that the re-formation of the Balkan League would materially shorten the war, and for that end he was prepared to make sacrifices. Negotiations, however, for this compromise were not even begun, inasmuch as the news that Bulgaria had contracted a large loan in the money markets of Berlin and Vienna, together with certain other unmistakable indications, made it clear to Venizelos that she had already definitely made up her mind to side with the Central Empires.

He therefore returned to his original policy of neutrality, with the qualification, however, that if ever the Entente should think fit to call upon Greece in the war against Turkey he held himself at their disposal, subject always to the stipulation as to the neutralization of the Bulgarian menace. Then early in the New Year came the tidings of the proposed attempt against the Dardanelles. Immediately on receipt of the news Venizelos saw the wonderful opportunity offered of following up the "very considerable" expectations of territory in Asia Minor; and, moreover, in his opinion the undertaking did not involve the same risks as the previous ones had done. The attack on the Dardanelles was to be undertaken by the Navy : but a landing-force would be needed, and the

Entente had none ready and on the spot. It was then this very force, together with the Greek Navy, which Venizelos determined that Greece should provide.

When we reflect upon this offer, we are struck not only by its amazing simplicity but also by the extraordinary opportunities which it opened out for Greece at a very trifling cost ; for Venizelos only proposed to mobilize one Army Corps (about 50,000 men) for the expedition, and this would not seriously weaken the strength of the Greek Army, which could remain on the watch to checkmate Bulgarian aggression, and further operations against Turkey would be undertaken by the Great Powers themselves. But the Dardanelles being forced, as seemed highly probable if the Greek landing force co-operated, Bulgaria would almost certainly betray Germany and Greece could come in with the rest of her Army. If, on the other hand, the expedition proved a failure, Greece, though only risking one Army Corps, would have gone a very long way to substantiating her claims in Asia Minor in the eyes of the Entente. But not only was the offer beneficial to Greece : it was also beneficial to the Entente. In a huge war 50,000 men in themselves are not a very imposing force : but if brought in just in the right place and just at the right moment, at a time too when through a variety of circumstances the Entente could not collect an equal number for the expedition, it was more than probable that they would turn the scales



in favour of the attacking force. In a word, this daring offer seemed likely to please every one—except the Turks.

Venizelos at once consulted the Greek General Staff, who strongly opposed the expedition not only on military but on political grounds. What was the use of this wild-goose chase in Asia Minor? Greece was large enough as it was. Moreover, if Greece extended her territory in Asia Minor, she would be brought into touch with the Great Powers; Russia coming round the southern shores of the Black Sea as far as Constantinople, the Italians to the south; and she would be crushed between the two. In propounding these views Dousmanes, Metaxas and the others were not only denying the whole foundation of Greek existence, but were guilty of a gross breach of duty: for the right of soldiers to base their judgment on political consideration cannot be admitted. Still the Prime Minister overlooked the irregularity of their conduct, and proceeded to clear away the other obstacle—the King's opposition. He went to see him, and placed before him a third memorandum, which he begged to be allowed to read to him. The exact contents of the memorandum can never be published: but in it the suggestion was made that England would be by no means dissatisfied to see a "bigger Greece" in Asia Minor barring the way of Russian aggression. (It was this suggestion which the King afterwards passed on to the Czar, to discredit Venizelos in his eyes.) At

any rate the contents of the memorandum deeply impressed the King, who finally said with great emotion, "Very well, then, in God's name."

But when the Premier came out of the audience chamber into the ante-room, he found Colonel Metaxas, who handed him an envelope with the remark: "Mr. President, here is my resignation. I cannot remain Chief of the Staff if a policy of which I do not personally approve is decided on." Venizelos was startled by this announcement: not only because Metaxas was a very brilliant soldier, but because he feared that his defection might shake public opinion and prejudice the future administration of public affairs, and also that the knowledge of internal dissensions in Greece might stimulate Bulgarian activity. Accordingly he took the courageous and unusual step of begging the King to summon a Crown Council of former Prime Ministers on the morrow (March 4th) "under your Presidency, in order to hear their views on the subject." When we remember that nearly all the former Prime Ministers, such as Ralles, Dragoumes and Theotokes, were his political opponents, the boldness of this course is apparent.

On the next day the Crown Council met. Ralles and Dragoumes proclaimed themselves in favour of the expedition: but Theotokes suggested that the former Chief of Staff should be called and that his views should be heard by the Council before they came to a definite decision. To this Venizelos

assented, and it was decided to call a second Crown Council on the following day. But in the meantime Venizelos decided, with his usual moderation, to reduce the proposed expeditionary force from one Army Corps to one division, thus cutting the ground from under the feet of his opponents. He also obtained from the Chief of Staff a written statement that this one division could be replaced by calling up a division of the reserve, so that there would remain available the whole original force of fifteen divisions to meet any contingency. On the next day, then, he laid the revised plans before the Crown Council. Metaxas, being called, admitted that the absence of one division would not impair the efficiency of the Army. Again Dragoumes and Ralles urged the King to take courage and go forward. Theotokes said : " You know my opinions : but I am bound to admit not only that my opinions may be out of date, but also that they are not shared by the Greek people : consequently Your Majesty must not depend on the fact that if you choose to follow another policy you might find me disposed to undertake its application." Thus the one opponent of the expedition admitted that his feelings were not shared by the Greek people. The matter seemed at last to have been settled : and Venizelos left the King's presence, confident that Greece would abandon her neutrality and take part in the attack with one division. But the King, for reasons which I shall discuss later, changed his mind ; and on the same afternoon

refused his consent. There was only one course open to Venizelos : in spite of the entreaties of the Greek people, and in opposition to the advice even of his political adversaries, he withdrew from office in order to facilitate the execution of the personal policy of the Crown. In this he showed his wisdom : for had he openly raised the standard of rebellion against the King's unconstitutional methods at the time, he would have placed himself in a false position. Such action would have been premature : and so he gave way with a good grace. Four days later the crisis was ended : and on March 10th Gounares formed his Ministry and took the oath.

It is impossible to conclude this chapter without endeavouring to weigh in the light of subsequent events the merits of the two policies of intervention and abstention. I have carefully studied the chief arguments advanced by what we may term the " Court " ; and they appear to be as follows : First the price of intervention had not been definitely fixed, for the somewhat vague concessions in Asia Minor had only been offered in the event of Greece co-operating with all her Army and Navy. Later the Entente could turn round on Greece and say, ' We offered you nothing for the assistance of your one division and we will give you nothing.' Second : we know now that the Gallipoli expedition was badly organized, and ended in a disastrous failure. After losing 200,000 men the English could boast of only one ' victory '—they managed

to withdraw what was left of their Army. Is it likely that a tiny force could have accomplished that which twenty times their number failed to effect? The Greek force would have been simply thrown away and sacrificed to no purpose. Third : Russia refused categorically to allow us to take part in the expedition for fear lest the arrival of Greek troops in Constantinople should 'disturb' the half a million Greek inhabitants. What was the good of fighting for Allies who did not desire your co-operation? Fourth : the French insisted that we should also declare war against the Central Empires. Their policy was clear. They wished us to commit ourselves irrevocably to war by sending a few troops; and then they would apply irresistible pressure to make us throw in all our Army and Navy. Had we sent even a platoon of Greek soldiers, we should have been forced to follow it up with our entire forces.

Such are the arguments of the "Court": the replies of Venizelos are worth noting. First: it is true that Greece had not insisted on the breaking up of the Turkish Empire, and had Turkey made peace as a result of the forcing of the Dardanelles, it is probable that Greece would not have received the concessions in Asia Minor. But if Greece had helped to solve the problem of the Straits by her initiative, and her co-operation, she would have definitely obtained reparation for, and a stoppage of, the Turkish persecutions of the Greeks in Asia Minor, besides gaining enormous prestige in Europe generally.

One could not expect too great a reward in return for the assistance of one division. Later on, if she had chosen, Greece could have undertaken further operations and could have insisted on further concessions. Second : it is absurd to condemn a policy on a consideration of the consequences which arose from its non-application. Supposing Greece had not sided with Bulgaria and Serbia against Turkey in the First Balkan War, Turkey would have had command of the sea, and would have been enabled to transport her Army from Asia Minor to European Turkey, with the probable result that Bulgaria and Serbia would have been defeated. But would it be fair on that account to say that Greece would have been justified in remaining neutral ? As a matter of fact the Dardanelles enquiry had established the fact beyond doubt that the seizure of Gallipoli at that time would not have been an operation of great difficulty. For as yet the peninsula was unfortified and had not more than 6,000 men, scattered and isolated, for its defence. It was only later, after the warning given by the preliminary attack, that the Turks seriously undertook the task of rendering it impregnable. Moreover, the very rumour of Greek co-operation was sufficient to cause a panic in Constantinople, where the decision was taken to abandon the town. Third : it is true that Russian public opinion viewed with no friendly eye Greek co-operation in the Dardanelles expedition. None the less there was never any declaration to the

effect that assistance would not be acceptable. On the contrary, on March 11th Romanos, the Greek Minister in Paris, wired that Delcassé had informed him that the Russian Government gave their unconditional consent to Greek participation.<sup>1</sup> Fourth: there had never been any suggestion on the part of France that Greece should definitely commit herself to declaring war on the Central Empires: the decision rested solely with Greece.

Such are the arguments of both sides. My own opinion is that the first three arguments of the "Court" are definitely refuted by Venizelos: but I consider his fourth reply rather weak, though it is technically conclusive. If the Dardanelles were forced, as he was justified in believing that they would be, all would be well for Greece. But there was always the chance that the expedition would be a failure: in that event how far would Greece be committed? Technically it may be true that no pressure would have been brought to bear on Greece to declare war against the Central Empires. But almost certainly the Central Empires would have declared war on her: which amounts to the same thing. The fact is, as Lloyd George once remarked, there is no half-way house in war: if you are involved to the extent of one division, you are involved to the extent of all you possess. Still, if we weigh every consideration for and against intervention, there can be little doubt that the policy of Venizelos, the

<sup>1</sup> White Book II, No. 8.

policy of intervention, combined for Greece the maximum of advantages with the minimum of risks. It was the policy of a far-seeing man : whereas the " Court " policy was, to say the least, unimaginative and short-sighted.



## CHAPTER III

# THE SECOND PERIOD OF THE WAR

(*March 5—August 23, 1915*)

## THE GOUNARES GOVERNMENT AND ENTENTE DIPLOMACY

OUTWARDLY the policy of Gounares appeared to be a continuation of the policy of Venizelos : with this difference, that the new Government had not approved of the 'hasty action' of the late Premier. Roughly speaking, the official messages<sup>1</sup> sent from Athens to the Great Powers amounted to the following declarations :—

" You need not be alarmed at the change of Government. We thought Venizelos too hot-headed in the matter of the Dardanelles. But in every other respect we are determined to follow his policy. Naturally we want Peace ; but if you are prepared to make us a handsome offer—well, gentlemen, the door is open, so pray step in. By the way, certain unpleasant people have been spreading the rumour that we are going to abandon Serbia. There is not

<sup>1</sup> See White Book I, Nos. 28, 29, and 31, dated March 10th, March 13th, and August 2nd respectively.

a word of truth in this allegation. Whatever happens we will stand by her, if Bulgaria attacks her. So step in, gentlemen—the door is open.”

But was the door really open? It was beginning to be plain, to all those who had eyes to see, that there were really two Governments at Athens. There was the actual Government in power, of whom by far the most notable member, Zographos, the Foreign Secretary, was honestly desirous of coming to an understanding and co-operating with the Entente; and there was a ‘back-stairs party’ at Court, who had not the slightest intention of taking sides against Germany or even against Bulgaria. Later on I will discuss who they were that formed the “Court” party and how thoroughly they had the King under their thumb at this period: for the present it is enough to say that they formed a very strong group and were indeed far more powerful than the nominal Government, with which the Entente were engaged in continuous negotiations during the next few months.

These negotiations need not take up much of our time: they were all abortive. But in order to make clear what was happening, I will give one specimen of these *pourparlers*. On the 11th of April the Entente made a definite offer to Greece of the vilayet of Smyrna in return for her co-operation against Turkey. On the 13th the Greek Government, after repeated Council meetings, sent a lengthy reply to the Entente. In the first place they pointed out that this proposal

was different from former ones, in that Greece did not ask for Bulgarian co-operation. Greece would come in on two conditions : first, that the war should have as its final object the breaking up of the Turkish Empire ; second, that the sector of Greek military action should not be outside European Turkey. These conditions being accepted, a double bargain, political and territorial, could be easily struck, and the Staffs could draw up a second military agreement giving all details as to the Greek sector. As it stands, this offer appeared very advantageous to the Entente : moreover, the strategic importance of landing in Thrace, by placing the Turk between two fires, could not be overestimated. But although the scheme had been twice approved by the Greek Staff, Dousmanes suddenly declared three days later that he felt ‘uneasy’ about the formulation of the proposal. He now made the following further suggestions : The Entente must place 450,000 men in the field in case Bulgaria should join Turkey ; the Greek sector must be placed “further West” ; and the landing between Ænos and the Dardanelles must be undertaken by the Entente. The object of this change of plan is apparent : Greece would only march *through Bulgaria* against Turkey. Thus either the Entente Armies would be used for destroying Bulgaria, or—and this seemed more probable—they would refuse to permit an attack on a neutral country, and Greece could continue her policy of non-intervention.

When he heard the new proposals, Zographos, who really was anxious to co-operate, was furious; and there followed a very stormy scene, in the course of which he said to Dousmanes, "Do you intend to play us false again?" Unhappily, Zographos was not in a position to resist—the Court party was too strong for him. He accordingly submitted to the Entente on the 20th of April an explanatory document of a military character, along the lines suggested by Dousmanes, so that the Powers should 'understand' the offer that was being made. The Powers showed their 'understanding' by failing even to reply.

Perhaps the easiest thing in the world is to criticize our diplomatists, basing one's criticism on 'what happened after.' The Balkan diplomacy of the Entente during the War has received more than its fair share of criticism. There were certainly many 'regrettable incidents': and British diplomacy as a whole followed in the East a patchy, makeshift, hand-to-mouth policy, characterized (in so far as it can be said to have any character) by lack of any attempt at co-ordination or coherence. "What looks like malignity"—if I may quote a distinguished Irishman—"in British dealings in the Balkans is really the result of stupidity—the inability of the English governing class to see any point of view but their own: and that not clearly." None the less a great deal of the criticism which has been levelled at them is as unfair as it is contradictory. We are

told almost in the same breath that they should have made sure of buying Bulgaria, and that they should have known that Bulgaria had already sold herself to Germany; that they should have known that Greece was deceiving us, and that they ought never to have driven Greece into the hands of Germany by their distrust of her.

The fact is, the position of our diplomatists was extraordinarily difficult. Their greatest difficulty during the period of the Gounares Ministry, from March till August 1915, was this: they were anxious to secure the co-operation of Bulgaria and of Greece, but they could trust neither. As long as Venizelos was Prime Minister they treated Greece with the greatest consideration; for they knew that they could trust him. But after his first resignation the situation was radically altered. For behind the friendly offers of the nominal Government there stood the malevolence of the hidden one, eager to undo secretly what had been openly effected. As we have seen from the negotiations just related, behind the amicable Zographos there lurked the shadow of the hostile Dousmanes. Most of the criticism of our diplomacy has arisen from an ignorance of this dual control of the Government which was now taking place at Athens. "Zographos," these critics said in effect, "was willing and anxious to come in with you. But you snubbed him; you encouraged Bulgarophile writers to abuse Greece in the English papers, and you treated Greek territory as though it belonged

to you, and offered it as a bribe to Bulgaria without mentioning the matter to Greece. You continued your fruitless attempts to win over Bulgaria long after it was known to every one that she had allied herself with Germany. Then when Greece asked that you should guarantee at least her integrity, you replied that you couldn't do so for fear of 'discouraging' Bulgaria!" These are the charges which I have heard on many lips; and indeed if the offers of Zographos represented the true wishes of those who governed Greece, the charges might have been justified. But they did not: and it is certain that our diplomatists knew the real state of affairs. The fact is that the small but powerful clique which had the ear of the King were playing an extraordinarily clever game, which was bound to put us in the wrong. Through the mouthpiece of a sincere Minister they made us very reasonable offers; but all the time they schemed so that his plans should come to nought. Then when negotiations eventually broke down, as they were bound to do, they turned round to the world and said, "How can we come in with the Entente? We make them the most reasonable offers, and they will not even listen to us." By such means they sowed suspicion in our minds so effectually that we turned to Bulgaria in despair. This was precisely what the 'clique' intended that we should do. They now turned round again to the world and said, "How can we trust the Entente? We offer to fight for them, and they will

not even guarantee to us the integrity of our own possessions ! ”

But, it may be said, even granted that the real Government of Greece was insincere, what good purpose could be served by turning to Bulgaria, whom you knew to be secretly allied to Germany ? It was certainly a forlorn hope ; but the extraordinary readiness of Bulgaria to betray her Allies, which is characteristic of her policy, led us to hope that she might still be won over, if she were heavily compensated. We failed, because Bulgaria was convinced that Germany would win ; but the attempt was none the less worth making. Numerically the Bulgarian Army was superior to that of Greece ; and moreover, whereas the worst that could happen to us in Greece was that she should remain neutral, and that the Entente should be deprived of the assistance of a quarter of a million soldiers, in Bulgaria diplomatic success would have been crowned by the addition of 350,000 men to the forces of the Entente and the diminution of a corresponding number from that of Germany. Thus numerically Bulgaria was—as far as we were concerned—nearly three times as valuable as Greece.

The unfortunate impasse in which we found ourselves did much to discredit the Entente in the eyes of many patriotic Greeks during this period, and was largely responsible for the disasters to Greece which were to follow. None the less, when the elections, which for one reason or another had been

postponed for three months, took place on June 18th, Venizelos and the Liberal party were returned by a substantial majority. But on the pretext that the King was still ill and that he might die if he were obliged to send for the Liberal leader and undergo the ordeal of discussing the political situation with him, the Gounares Ministry lingered on in power for another nine weeks after the elections ; and it was not till August 23rd that Venizelos resumed the reins of office. But in the meanwhile, on July 30th, Constantine and Gounares had taken the decisive step of assuring Bulgaria secretly that, in the event of her attacking Serbia, Greece would not intervene. Their assurances had far-reaching effects : for Bulgaria felt herself at last free to espouse the cause of Germany.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE THIRD PERIOD OF THE WAR

*(August 23—November 6, 1915)*

#### THE SECOND MINISTRY OF VENIZELOS AND THE ZAIMES MINISTRY

**T**HE return to power of Venizelos was tragic in its futility ; for, by the secret declaration to Bulgaria of July 30th, the Court party had effectively shorn our Samson's locks. But, all unconscious of what had been done behind his back, he set to work with renewed vigour to disperse the doubts with which, thanks to the insincerity of his predecessors, Greece was now regarded by the Great Powers. Directly he had taken office he explained his policy to the King. Naturally there was no longer any possibility of taking part in the Dardanelles Expedition : but Greece must return to her original policy, and must abide by the principles laid down at the beginning of the War, the chief of which was the determination never to allow Bulgaria to crush Serbia. Having obtained the King's approval, he made a corresponding announcement in the Chamber, and declared emphatically, not only to Serbia and the Entente but also to the Central Empires, that

on no account would Greece suffer any Bulgarian aggression against Serbia. How much impression the declaration made on Bulgaria her subsequent behaviour makes sufficiently clear.

But Venizelos was not blind to the storm-clouds which were gathering in the Balkans. It was known in Greece, who informed the Entente, that a 'dress-rehearsal' of the attack against Serbia had been carried out along the Serbo-Bulgarian frontier: and everything pointed to an imminent Bulgarian attack. None the less the Entente, with more perseverance than good sense, continued to the very last to negotiate with her, on the basis of conceding her Serbian and Greek territory. As late as September 22nd Venizelos and Passitch, the Serbian Premier, agreed, under pressure from the Entente, to hand over a large portion of Macedonia to their neighbour. There is little excuse for the Entente. Instead of making preparations to help Serbia, they carried on futile discussions until the very eve of the attack.

On September 23rd Venizelos received intelligence that Bulgaria, having now satisfactorily completed her arrangements, had decided on the partial mobilization of her Army. He proceeded at once to the Palace, and asked, if the news received confirmation, that Greece should immediately mobilize her two Macedonian Army Corps, as a measure of security. The King consented. But early the next morning the news arrived that Bulgaria had proclaimed a general mobilization. Venizelos telephoned to the

King and asked for an immediate interview, that he might communicate the news and submit to him an order for the general mobilization of the Greek Army. He was informed that the King could not see him till five o'clock, the time being then 9.30. In the meantime the Premier called a Ministerial council, came to an agreement with his colleagues, and instructed the Minister of War, General Dangles, to summon the Chief of Staff and ask him to draw up the order of mobilization. It was arranged that Dangles should come to the Palace with the order ready for signature at 6.30 that evening.

At five o'clock Venizelos presented himself at the Palace, informed the King of the changed circumstances, and urged that as Bulgaria had now proclaimed a general mobilization Greece must at once follow suit. The King did not deny Greece's obligation to assist Serbia, but said, "You know, I don't want to help Serbia, because Germany will win, and I don't want to be beaten." "But," said the Premier, "Greece will not be beaten," and he proceeded to make an exposition of the military possibilities, which is well worth noting. The Bulgarian *moral* after her recent defeats was poor, whereas that of Greece was excellent. Moreover, Bulgaria was seriously short of ammunition. If, therefore, Greece attacked her, whilst the majority of her forces were engaged against Serbia, the attack would probably be successful, and she might even hope to reach Sofia. But supposing the attack proved unsuccessful,

Greece could at least keep in touch with the Serbian Army, and together they could retreat to a position along the general lines from the frontiers of Eastern Macedonia through the Strumnitza valley to Krivolak and Tetovo—positions of extraordinary natural strength, from which the Austro-Germans, for technical reasons, would never be able to dislodge them. As he proceeded to point out, the enemy's base of supply would have to be far-off Budapest; whereas the Greek base would be Salonica, which was near at hand. Again the Austro-Germans had only one railway of importance, that which runs down the Vardar valley, and a subsidiary one from Sofia to Philippopolis, whereas the Greeks had three. A single line of railway is incapable of serving more than 125,000 men. Therefore, however many troops Germany had at her disposal, she could not employ more than a limited number, and a number only two-thirds of the strength of those of her opponents. Later on the English and French forces would arrive and could assume the offensive. Thus there was absolutely no fear of Greece meeting the fate of Belgium, with which the General Staff were trying to influence public opinion. But the King was quite unmoved by this extraordinarily brilliant appreciation of the military situation. He did not argue; for argument was impossible. But he repeated over and over again, "I don't want to fight. We shall be beaten by Germany. I don't want to fight." To this Venizelos replied, "Your Majesty, having

failed to persuade you, I feel it is my duty, as representing the sovereignty of the people, to tell you that this time you have no right to differ from me. By the last elections the people have approved my policy and given me their confidence: and the electorate knew that the foundation of my policy was that we should not allow Bulgaria to crush Serbia and expand overmuch, so as to crush us to-morrow. At this point, therefore, you cannot depart from this policy: unless, of course, you are determined to set aside the constitution, in which case you must say so clearly, abrogating the constitution and assuming full responsibility by a Royal Decree." The King admitted that he was bound to obey the popular verdict, when it was a question of the internal affairs of the country: but in a question of foreign affairs, a great international question, he felt he must act as seemed right to him in his own mind, because he was responsible before God. Directly Venizelos heard for the first time this doctrine of monarchy by divine prescription issuing from the King's lips he knew that his case was hopeless. So, having once more called his attention to the constitution, he offered the King his resignation. But Constantine besought him to remain in office and sign the decree of mobilization. For a change of Government would mean delay in signing it; and although he did not want to fight, he saw that Bulgarian mobilization necessitated this step purely as a defensive measure.

He also pointed out that it was quite possible that Bulgaria would maintain an 'armed neutrality'; and in that case, no one need know of their difference of opinion. With a heavy heart the Prime Minister at length gave way, and the decree of mobilization was signed.

But on the next day the Press, acting on a hint from the General Staff, informed the general public of the differences which had arisen between the King and his Prime Minister, thus weakening and discounting the effect of the mobilization abroad, and creating alarm and uncertainty at home. Venizelos went straight to the King and compelled him to sign a communiqué to the effect that 'The Crown is in agreement with its responsible Government not only in the matter of the call for mobilization but also as to its future policy.'

In the course of the discussion on the previous evening the question had arisen, which had troubled the General Staff, as to whether Serbia would be able to put in the field the 150,000 soldiers for the war against Bulgaria which they said she was obliged to do by the military convention. Without enquiring whether such an obligation really existed, Venizelos suggested that an appeal should be made to the Entente to send 150,000 troops. "Certainly," said the King, "but they must send home troops, and not colonials." On the strength of this, the Prime Minister sent the same evening an urgent appeal to the Entente Ministers to come and see him at once

at the Ministry. When they arrived he informed them that the Greek mobilization had already been ordered, and asked them if the Powers would be disposed to supply the 150,000 bayonets, which Serbia was called upon to furnish against Bulgaria. A quarter of an hour after they had gone, Venizelos received a message from the King asking him not to make the suggested *démarche* with the Powers. He replied that the *démarche* had already been made : and he added that in any case " I should not have been prevented from taking this step by the expression of the King's opinion, because as responsible Minister it is necessary, in order to concert my plans, for me to know whether the Powers are disposed to furnish this assistance."

Late on the evening of the following day, September 24th, Serbia applied formally to Greece and to the Entente. She told Greece that it was now an absolute certainty that she would be attacked by Bulgaria in a few days' time. Would Greece approve of Serbia making an immediate assault, before Bulgaria had completed her mobilization ? Venizelos asked the King whether he would consent. The reply is interesting ; for in it the King acknowledges that the Greco-Serb treaty was binding. " I think it better that the Serbs should not attack the Bulgarians, because our alliance is defensive, and if the Serbians should be the first to attack, it would be a question whether we should in such a case be obliged to go to their assistance." The reply of the Entente to a

similar request from Serbia was voiced by Sir Edward Grey in his famous speech in the House of Commons. Bulgaria had assured the Entente that her policy was only one of armed neutrality. On no account, therefore, must Serbia attack a neutral country. Serbia abandoned the enterprise, believing that when the attack at last materialized, Greece and the Entente would be at her side.

On the 25th the Entente suddenly began to move. They replied to Greece that they would furnish the required fighting force of home troops; and they even fixed the time within which this force should arrive. When the King had been informed of their reply, he requested that the Entente should be told that "So long as Bulgaria does not attack Serbia and does not thereby create the situation which obliges us to abandon our neutrality, these forces must not be despatched: for their arrival on Greek soil would constitute a breach of our neutrality." A day or two later came the reply of the Entente: that the departure of these troops had already been ordered, and that they were now on their way to Greece from Mudros and Marseilles. "Having once informed us," they added, "that your policy is to counter-attack Bulgaria and take your place as our Ally in the event of Bulgaria attacking Serbia, we do not see why the arrival of these reinforcements should be delayed. We take full responsibility for asserting that Bulgaria is going to attack Serbia: and you will then have reason to thank us, for you will have



your reinforcements ready, instead of having to wait for them."

Venizelos admitted that this statement pleased him very much : but as Greece would be nominally neutral, until the attack took place, he would have to make a protest against the disembarkation. But having once made the protest, he would do everything in his power to assist the friendly 'invaders.' Constantine appeared satisfied with this, but insisted that the protest should be couched in emphatic language.

In such manner did the famous Salonica Expeditionary Force originate. It should be noted that the first disembarkation did not take place till the afternoon of October 5th ; by which time Venizelos had already resigned and the Zaimes Government had been formed. Had the new Government desired to do so, they could still have turned to the Entente and said, "Things have changed : Venizelos is gone ; we are not going to help Serbia ; please don't land." It is not probable that the Entente would have consented not to land : but the fact that instead of doing so Zaimes promised to give the Anglo-French troops every facility, proves the unfairness of the subsequent charge made against Venizelos, that he alone was responsible for bringing these unwelcome guests to Greece.

On September 29th the Greek Chamber met : and on October 4th Venizelos declared once again Greece's unalterable determination to support Serbia :

and on a division his policy was approved of by a majority of 46. During the debate he was asked by one of the opposition what he would do, if in going to the assistance of Serbia he was met by German troops, and he answered boldly that in that case the Greek troops would make no distinction between German and Bulgarian enemies.

Immediately after the debate he was summoned by the King, who informed him that he did not share his views. The Prime Minister replied that he would submit his resignation, as he did not think it was possible for him to raise the constitutional issue at the moment. At one o'clock on the next day, October 5th, he was dismissed from office, and in the afternoon Zaimes formed his new Ministry.

Venizelos has been much criticized for resigning on this occasion, and he is considered by some to have shared the responsibility for the violation of the free institutions of the country. But if we examine the matter carefully, it is difficult to see how he could have acted differently. Had he made a stand at this moment by refusing to resign, had he continued in office as though the King no longer existed, he would almost certainly have precipitated a civil war. No doubt three-quarters of the country would have sided with him: but the other quarter, which included many ex-Ministers and the majority of the Greek Staff, constituted a formidable opposition. Moreover, as we know from our own Civil War, the traditional reverence for the Crown would

have drawn to its side a large number of the more uneducated classes. The attitude of the Army, too, was doubtful: for many of the soldiers loved their King, and would have followed his lead, even had they known him to be in the wrong. Supposing then that civil war broke out, what would be the consequences? Bulgaria would brush aside the unprepared expeditionary force now gathering in Salonica, and would fall on a divided Greece, and crush her. Venizelos weighed the matter carefully, and decided that it was better for him to resign than to risk the disastrous consequences of a civil war.

The Zaimes Ministry was formed for a definite purpose, that of repudiating the Greco-Serb treaty; and having accomplished its work, it was dismissed. The Prime Minister was a man universally respected in Greece, for he had rendered great services to his country. But on this occasion he consented to become the tool of the King. We may gauge his attitude by his reply, when the permanent officials at the Ministry attempted to enlighten him by calling his attention to the various points involved in the treaty: "I do not want to waste my time in the study of such details. For what is the use, when I have taken office with the express purpose of not carrying out the treaty?" Such language is not becoming to a Prime Minister in a country which is supposed to be governed by a constitutional monarchy: and Zaimes cannot be absolved from a tremendous responsibility for adopting this attitude.

On October 11th, the day of the Bulgarian invasion of Serbia, the new Prime Minister met the Chamber, and was promised the provisional support of the Liberal party. On the same day he informed the Serbian Government that for certain reasons, with which I will deal later when I come to discuss the treaty, Greece no longer felt herself bound to come to her assistance.<sup>1</sup>

None the less, apart from this violation of a sacred treaty, the new Government managed to keep on friendly terms with the Entente, who not only supplied them with money, but actually offered Cyprus to Greece, if she would come in with them. But this offer was not accepted, as all thought of intervention had now been abandoned. Indeed, it was too late now to save Serbia: for owing to the desertion of Greece, the Entente troops, who would have been in time had they played the part of reinforcing the Greek Army, for which they were originally destined, were unable to get into touch with the Serbs, and were compelled a few weeks later to retreat towards Salonica. On the 3rd of November the Chamber was deliberately insulted by the Minister of War, General Giannakitsas; and when a protest was made, he was promptly appointed A.D.C. to the King. In spite of this provocation, Venizelos still promised to support the Zaimes Ministry, provided Giannakitsas were not reinstated. But the Court was resolved to do away with Zaimes, whom it considered too scrupulous.

<sup>1</sup> See White Book I, No. 34.

and to dissolve the Chamber. As half of the voters were still mobilized, it would be a perfectly simple matter to cook the elections, and Venizelos and his party could be wiped out. In spite of the declaration of Venizelos that if the Government proceeded to a second illegal dissolution of the Chamber the Liberal party would abstain from the Elections, the Ministry was dismissed and the Chamber dissolved on November 6th. On the same day Skouloudes formed his new Ministry.

## CHAPTER V

### THE LAST PERIOD OF THE WAR

*(November 6, 1915—November 11, 1918.)*

WITH the dismissal of Zaimes a definite change in Greek politics took place. As long as he remained in office there was still a remote chance, not indeed of Greek co-operation, but of at least a friendly understanding with the Entente. But with the advent of Skouloudes Greek interests became definitely sacrificed to Germany. It was not till later that the possibility of open co-operation with Germany presented itself to the Greek Court, though already the policy of covert opposition to the Entente and covert support of her enemies took definite shape. Officially the Greek Government appeared to be treating the Salonica forces with every consideration, and played to admiration the part of 'Injured Innocence,' long-suffering in spite of a thousand provocations and encroachments: actually they were endeavouring by every means to thwart and to destroy us—a course in which, but for geographical reasons, they would have succeeded. Or, to state the position in another way, as long as Zaimes was in office there were two definite and

conflicting parties : and although the 'Germanic' party had won the day on the Dardanelles issue and on the issue of assistance to Serbia, there was always a possibility that the tide would turn, and that the verdict of the people would prevail. But with the second dissolution of the Chamber, and the advent of Skouloudes, the 'Liberal' party was definitely crushed, and could only have regained power by instigating a revolution. This course, as we have seen, Venizelos was not as yet prepared to adopt.

It is necessary to say a word concerning the new Prime Minister : for he was to hold office for eight months. Skouloudes was over eighty years of age when he became Prime Minister for the first time—surely an unparalleled record. Always a rather fussy and pompous man, his faults had been accentuated with years, and although extraordinarily ignorant of the duties of a Prime Minister, he now became obsessed with the idea of his own importance ; for, like most incapable men, he had an unwarranted confidence in his own abilities. He had amassed a large fortune as a banker, and it was only late in life that he turned to politics. A great admirer of Venizelos, he had assisted him in London during the negotiations after the First Balkan War. In return for these services he had fully expected to be rewarded with the Grand Cross of the Order of the Saviour—a very rare distinction. But his expectations had been disappointed ; and his admira-

tion for Venizelos turned to hatred. Petty jealousy and ambition are not becoming to a man of his years, and it would have been well for his reputation had he retired from public life altogether in 1914. But the bait was too enticing, and he undertook a task which was beyond his power, and which was to cover him with disgrace.

Directly he had taken office he hastened to declare the policy that he intended to pursue. In a circular telegram<sup>1</sup> to the Entente he informed them that "his Government adopted the repeated declarations of Zaimes concerning the friendly attitude of the Royal Government towards the Allied forces in Salonica, and that it is sufficiently conscious of its true interests and of what it owes to the Powers protecting Greece not to deviate on any consideration from the policy which has been defined." He promised further to maintain neutrality in the form of 'most sincere benevolence' towards the Entente. This is sufficiently 'gushing': for it was not necessary to say more than 'benevolence.' A fortnight later he gave a startling proof of his interpretation of a 'most sincerely benevolent' attitude. Towards the end of November the Entente forces were withdrawing towards Greek territory; and Skouloudes, who was completely ignorant on the subject of international law, was informed by the German Minister that, if the armed forces of a belligerent took refuge in a neutral country, according to the

<sup>1</sup> See White Book I, No. 37, dated November 8, 1915.



Hague Convention they must be disarmed and interned. The old man, without saying a word to his colleagues, trotted round to the French Ministry, and informed Guillemin that he would have to intern the Serbian troops if they retreated on to Greek soil. The French Minister asked him if that was his conception of 'most sincerely benevolent' neutrality. "I don't know anything about that," said the irascible old gentleman, "and if it comes to that, we shall intern your troops too." A panic ensued in the Entente countries, as the news was circulated. The Greek Minister in Petrograd was hauled out of bed at two in the morning by Sazonoff, the Russian Foreign Minister, and was asked for an explanation of his Government's attitude. As this was the first he had heard of the matter, the explanation was difficult to give. A few hours later the rest of the Greek Ministry were informed of their chief's *gaffe* and they hastened to repair the damage, by informing the Entente that what he had meant was not "We are *going* to intern them" (*nous devons*), but 'We *ought* to intern them' (*nous devrions*). The panic subsided; but the Prime Minister's indiscretion left no doubt as to the real intentions of his colleagues. He had blurted out the policy which at present they did not dare to pursue openly.

On December 19th the elections were held; 300,000 voters, half the electorate, were under arms, and it was plain that the Government intended to keep in barracks those who were likely to vote for

the Liberals. Consequently, in answer to an appeal of Venizelos on November 21st, his party abstained from taking part in the elections, and the Government were assured of a submissive Chamber.

At the time of the elections the Government promised to demobilize the Army so soon as the elections were over. "That cut-throat Venizelos has gone now, the man who wanted to force the people to shed their blood ; now that we are rid of him, we will dismiss you to your homes." But the Elections were over, and the Army remained mobilized. As we shall see, no military object could be gained by this prolongation ; for the Government had already decided to abandon national territory without resistance. The object was political : to heap hatred on Venizelos, but for whom the soldiers were told that they need never have left their homes ; to bring economic ruin on the country by the dislocation of its normal life ; to bribe the officers by distributing extra allowances among them ; to keep under surveillance 'suspected' persons ; to organize among the soldiers a deliberate propaganda ; to teach them that bravery and honour counted for nothing compared with the instinct of self-preservation—in a word, "the policy of the Government and of the Staff was to crush the Greek people physically and morally, so as to make them incapable of ever rising up to call their Government to account." These words of Venizelos, which I have quoted, form a terrible indictment against Skouloudes and

his Government of 'old men'; but the indictment has never been answered, and the guilty ones must be sentenced by default. The only palliation that they might plead would be that they were convinced that Germany would win, and that the means justified the end, which was to lead the people, in spite of themselves, along the path best suited to their interest. But this is a dangerous theory based on an unwarrantable premise, as I hope to prove later, when I come to discuss the conduct of the Crown.

Two other incidents distinguish and give the key to the real policy of the Skouloudes Ministry: the refusal to allow the Serbian troops to use the Greek railways on April 12th, and the surrender of Rupel on May 23rd, 1915. From a sentimental point of view this first incident arouses stronger feelings of disgust than perhaps any other action of the Greek Government. Let us glance for a moment at the conditions. The Serbian Army was betrayed at the last moment by Greece, and, hemmed in on all sides by its foes, was compelled to retreat through the trackless, barren mountains of Albania to the coast. Thence the Army was transported, after terrible sufferings, to Corfu. In April once again the Serbs were ready to fight; and to avoid the long journey by sea from Corfu to Salonica and the submarine danger, they requested their former Allies to allow them the use of the Greek railway from Corinth to Salonica. But the Greek Government, in spite of its repeated declarations of the

most sincerely benevolent neutrality, refused to render even this small and unimportant service to the nation which it had betrayed. No doubt it was a small matter : but it was just because it was a small matter that it aroused such hatred and bitterness against the Greeks.

With the surrender of Rupel I will only deal shortly, for it is not a matter on which one cares to linger. The Skouloudes Government adopted the usual course. The Germans informed them that it would be necessary for them to occupy Rupel as a defensive measure, to meet the advances of the Entente troops in this sector. As a matter of fact, by blowing up the bridge at Demir-Hissar we had shown plainly that we did not propose to undertake an offensive on this front. Clearly, therefore, the German object was offensive and not defensive. But the Greek Government approved the German declaration ; though it is clear that, had they lodged a protest beforehand, the Germans would have let the matter drop. But they did not even stipulate that Bulgaria, against which the fortifications of Rupel had been designed, should be excluded therefrom, and that the occupation should be made by Germany only. Accordingly, on May 23rd a Bulgarian detachment, with a German officer in charge, crossed the frontier and ordered the surrender of the fort, which is the key to Eastern Macedonia. The Greek troops holding the fort, in accordance with secret instructions from Athens, retired without firing a

shot. On the very next day Skouloudes went down to the Chamber, and, though no explanation had been asked for, proceeded to give a graphic description of how the Greek troops put up a gallant resistance, but were gradually being overpowered; when the Government, seeing the determination of the invaders, and fearing that a general engagement would ensue, wired to the Commander of the Army Corps to cease resistance. He also declared emphatically that the attack on Rupel was a 'surprise' attack; and that the "insidious rumours" of any previous 'understanding' with Germany were "unworthy of contradiction."

The impression created abroad by this humiliating surrender led to two consequences disastrous for Greece. In view of the danger to his right wing arising from the surrender of Rupel, General Sarrail, the Commander-in-Chief of the Salonica forces, proclaimed Martial Law in the town; the effect of which was to abolish Greek sovereignty in Macedonia. By this *coup d'état* all the important points in the city, the post and telegraph offices, the wireless station, the Government building, the police stations and the railway stations were occupied. A month later the Greek occupation of Northern Epirus, granted to Venizelos by the Entente in 1914, was revoked, as Italy refused to entrust the security of her forces in that sector to the tender care of Greek officials. Thus by its action the Greek Government had not only lost Rupel, but also two

large Greek Provinces. On June 21st the Entente sent a Note to Greece demanding the immediate demobilization of the Army, the formation of a Government which made some pretence at governing, and a dissolution of the Chamber and the holding of new elections. Faced with this Note, the Greek Government hesitated. The Staff advised the Crown to resist, but eventually wiser counsels prevailed, and the Note was accepted. Thus ended the disastrous Government of the 'old men.' On the 23rd Zaimes again took office, and the demobilization of the Army was begun. The Chamber, however, was not dissolved, but adjourned.

The return of Zaimes opened up for a moment the possibility of better days for Greece. We know that the Germans were very anxious about the new situation created by the Greek acceptance of the Entente Note, though they admitted that resistance would have been hopeless. What they feared most was the holding of the elections, for they knew that Venizelos would be returned by a large majority.

But the real Government remained the same, and although the Army was demobilized, bands of reservists were organized, destined later to operate in Macedonia against the Entente, and at the time designed to influence the coming elections. None the less the 'Court' saw themselves faced with a decisive defeat at the polls—when the Bulgarians, by invading Eastern Macedonia, came to the rescue by making impossible the holding of elections.

There is no proof that they were actually invited by the Court, but the probabilities are in favour of this assumption. At any rate they were certainly not refused admission. For it was only after the Bulgars had descended into Eastern Macedonia and had commenced to exterminate the Greek population that the Government turned to Germany and asked her to prevent her Allies from entering Seres, Drama and Kavalla. On August 9th Germany replied with the assurance that the Bulgarians should not occupy these towns. Relying on these promises, Zaimes artlessly dissuaded the inhabitants of Kavalla from removing their stocks of tobacco, which were worth many millions. A few days later Bulgaria occupied the towns; and when Greece protested, Germany replied <sup>1</sup> that "the situation has changed, by reason of the fact that the Greek troops have surrendered of their own free will to the Bulgarians the forts and batteries under discussion."

With the surrender of the Kavalla district, Greece lost nearly all her heavy guns, a fifth of her mobilization material, and an even larger proportion of light artillery. It is difficult to see why all this material was allowed to be left so near the frontier, after the demobilization of the greater part of the Army; unless it was left there on purpose that it should fall into the hands of Germany. There is also the matter of Hadjopoulos' surrender to Germany with 8,000 troops, which requires an explanation. Unless the

<sup>1</sup> White Book I, No. 68.

Greek Government did not wish the troops to be returned to her, for fear lest they might one day fight for the Entente, there is no apparent reason why they should not have been demanded back from Germany. One has heard of belligerent troops being interned by a neutral State; but for the troops of a neutral country to be 'interned' by a belligerent State is altogether novel!

With the entrance of Roumania into the War on August 28th, Venizelos comes once again to the fore after his long retirement, and becomes from then onwards till to-day the central figure in Greek politics. Directly he heard the news, he went to Zaimes and informed him that after Roumania's declaration of war, which removed the last argument of the General Staff, above all after the invasion of Macedonia, after Germany's disregard of her promise that the Bulgarians would not enter Seres, Drama, and Kavalla, he considered that the last obstacles were removed which had hitherto prevented him from undertaking the fight against autocracy. Either the King must forthwith declare war on the Central Empires, or Venizelos would divide the country by calling on all those who were prepared to make the necessary sacrifices, to follow him. The King was at once informed, and appeared to be much impressed. In view of the feverish excitement caused in Greece by the last events, he deemed it advisable to gain a little time; and so he instructed Zaimes to open negotiations with the Entente, and to keep Venizelos



informed of what was being done. But the popular fever in Greece soon cooled down ; and when a few officers in Macedonia attempted to start a revolution in Salonica, in order to galvanize the Greek Government into action, the whole of the Eleventh Division stationed in the town refused to join it. The collapse of this premature movement persuaded the King that the perturbation of public opinion was only transitory, and that he could with safety keep out of the War. He therefore decided to repudiate the promise given through Zaimes, and to return to his former policy of malevolent neutrality. Zaimes withdrew from office, and Venizelos at last decided to become a rebel.

It was only after a long internal struggle that he took this resolution. It was so easy for him to say to himself : " I have done all that was possible within the existing laws to save the State from disaster. I have rendered extraordinary services to my country in the past ; and my duty as a citizen is fully discharged. I have done everything possible within the law ; it is not my duty to proceed further, by breaking down the existing laws, to create a new condition by which I might hope to resist the approaching disaster." Other reasons, too, made him hesitate. He had had some experience of rebellions in the past : he knew that they were hazardous adventures, only to be undertaken when all else had failed ; he knew, too, how easily a revolution may degenerate into anarchy and chaos.

Besides, one must be young to lead a revolution ; and he was no longer a young man. Moreover, would the Greek nation answer the call ? Or had the virus of German propaganda poisoned all that was best in the nation ?

In his famous speech in the Chamber on August 26, 1917, he told the world of the little incident which decided him to take the plunge. As it gives us a real understanding of his character, it is worth recalling. One day a friend came to see him, and told him of a conversation he had with his barber. The barber had said, " We plain men are saying that, besides the King, Venizelos himself has a great responsibility." When the friend asked why, the barber said, " Venizelos tells us we are making for disaster. Well, then, if we are making for disaster, why shouldn't we prevent all this ? " " Then why don't you look about you," said the friend, " and prevent it ? " " How can we ? " was the reply. " As long as Venizelos is alive and well, we can't do such a thing. Because every one thinks that when Venizelos, who sees things better than we do, sits quiet, it means that nothing can be done. But if it wasn't for Venizelos, the rest of us, the people, would be trying to see if we could save the place from disaster."

Not seldom a stray conversation or an insignificant incident has altered the whole course of history ; and it was so in this case. Directly Venizelos put away all selfish considerations and began to make

his plans. He found in Admiral Conduriotes (afterwards one of the Salonica triumvirate) a willing and eager assistant. The latter had been a member of the last two Cabinets, as Commander-in-chief of the land and sea forces; and he affirmed positively that Greece was being betrayed, that the guiding policy was German, that it was a disgrace for the Greek people to accept the situation without a protest.

On September 25th Venizelos left Phaleron; and in spite of the activities of a German submarine, which had received special instructions to torpedo the vessel, he landed in Crete, where the Revolution was proclaimed on the 26th. He was, however, careful not to give the movement the direct character of civil war; and although he knew he was injuring his cause thereby, he restrained any anti-dynastic tendency. Even now, at the eleventh hour, he gave the King one more chance. Apparently Constantine was rather perturbed at the revolutionary movement; for through an intermediary, Venizelos was asked what his attitude would be in the event of a new Government being formed, to enter the War at the side of the Entente? Would he expect to be made Prime Minister; or would he be content if some of his friends were included in the Government? The reply of Venizelos is characteristic. If the King did his duty, not only would Venizelos not claim the Presidency, but he would not deem it advisable to be represented by any of his friends in the Ministry. But he would give his unconditional support to any

Government whatever that might be formed to carry out the National programme.

But if the King in a moment of panic had thought of yielding, he quickly changed his mind, and reverted to his old policy. This policy continued till January 16, 1917, when the Royalist Government were compelled to accept the Entente ultimatum, which practically rendered them powerless for evil. The events which led up to this ultimatum—the assassinations of December 1st, the outrages of December 2nd, the conspiracy against the Salonica Armies, and the attempts of the reservists—are dealt with in detail in the later part of this book. Beyond this, from the day Venizelos left Athens until June 14, 1917, when Constantine departed from the country which he had done his best to ruin, Athenian politics are dull and uneventful. One puppet Prime Minister after another took office, but the 'power behind the throne' remained unchanged. On May 3rd Zaimes formed his third Ministry, and he was still in office when the r  fuse was cleared away on June 14th.

But to return for a moment to Salonica, where Venizelos had established the Greek Provisional Government on October 5th. At first the Entente looked with suspicion on the new Government; and at a Conference held at Boulogne on the 20th it was decided not to recognize it officially. Indeed it was not till late in December that Lloyd George, who had just formed his new Government (and who has always had the greatest admiration for Venizelos),

took the lead by appointing Lord Granville as representative of England accredited to the Provisional Government. France followed our lead shortly after, by appointing M. de Billy as the representative of France. In the meanwhile Venizelos had declared war on Germany and her Allies ; and had ensured the success of the new movement by his wonderful and inspiring enthusiasm. Many thousands of Greeks answered the call ; many thousands more would have joined him, had not the Entente agreed to form a neutral zone between New and Old Greece, and thus robbed the Provisional Government of many recruits, who were eager, but unable to join the new movement.

After the events of December 1st-2nd in Athens, a definite change came over Venizelos' attitude. He was now convinced beyond a doubt that it was impossible for Constantine to remain in Greece any longer. He accordingly begged the Entente to remove the barrier of the neutral zone and to allow him to march on Athens ; as he was convinced that the presence of his Army in Old Greece would be sufficient to reunite the country, and to expel the King, without bloodshed. But the Entente, having given the King their promise not to allow Venizelos to cross the artificial barrier, refused their permission, and would not even permit the extension of his authority to Thessaly, although the inhabitants of its chief towns clamoured for him. At length at the beginning of June, the question of the Thessalian harvest brought matters to a head. If the Royalists

were allowed to keep it, they could defy the blockade and continue their old policy during the coming winter. Compelled at last to act, the Entente acted with great promptitude. M. Jonnart, the Plenipotentiary of England, France and Russia, arrived outside Athens on June 10th ; and four days later Constantine, his wife, and the Crown Prince were taken away on a British destroyer, and the King's younger son Alexander was proclaimed King.

On June 27, 1917, at the almost unanimous request of the Greek nation, Venizelos returned to Athens, and became once again Prime Minister of a united nation. The Chamber which had been elected on June 13, 1915, and which had been illegally dissolved, was reunited, and proceeded to declare war on Germany and her Allies.

The subsequent history of Greece, which is the history of Venizelos, is too well known and too recent to require recording. Once the evil influence of the Crown and of the Court had been removed, the country proved its marvellous powers of recuperation. Thus Greece was enabled to play an honourable part in the War ; and after so much shame and humiliation, she has at last vindicated the proudest possession of any nation—her honour. No Greek to-day need feel ashamed of his country.

## PART II





## CHAPTER I

### THE SECRET CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN ATHENS AND BERLIN

**S**OPHIE, in the happy times when she was still a Queen, was in the habit of declaring that she took no interest in politics at all, and that her only care in life was to minister to her conjugal and maternal duties. On one occasion only she descended into the political arena, and that was to declare her love for England, and to express the pious wish that she should be allowed after the War to live awhile in Eastbourne. Unfortunately for this charming picture of Martha-like domesticity, certain messages have been deciphered by the Greek Government, which passed to and fro between Athens and Berlin, and which reveal another and rather less tender side of the charming Sophie's character. This telegraphic correspondence, which has lately been published in a supplementary Greek White Book, was carried out by three means: by wireless telegraph, by cable, and by a telegraphic land-wire which worked for some time by way of Monastir. Unfortunately, a large part of the correspondence is missing, as is evidenced by the special serial number of the tele-

grams of the Palace, which at the end of 1916 had reached a number higher than three hundred. This is almost as unfortunate as the unfinished ending of 'Edwin Drood.' But we must not complain, for the correspondence in our possession is sufficiently entertaining. Before examining some of these precious documents, I may mention that the actual transmitting of messages was entrusted to the brothers Theotoky: brother "N" being Greek Minister at Berlin and brother "J" Master of Ceremonies at the Court of Queen Sophie, Athens.

The first four documents (36-39 in the White Book) of which the first is dated December 21, 1915, come from brother 'N' at Berlin, and concern 'thirty pieces of silver'—or to be more accurate, the 'loan' of 40 million francs made by Germany to the King of Greece. There is some trouble about the most convenient method of transmitting: but we are relieved to learn that a satisfactory solution of the trouble has been found. No doubt Constantine will make good use of the money: we can almost hear the Kaiser chuckling.

The next document (No. 40), dated December 29, 1915, concerns a bigger enterprise than the mere bribery of a few politicians or soldiers. Brother 'N' has taken certain 'proposals' of Constantine (unfortunately missing) to Von Jagow. The 'proposals,' one gathers, concern the co-operation of the Greek Royalist troops with an offensive of the Bulgaro-Germans against Sarraïl's Salonica defences.

The Greek Government having invited the Entente troops to Salonica, it is of course quite natural that the King of Greece should endeavour to stab them in the back. Moreover, in return for his co-operation, the King had formulated certain 'demands,' which brother 'N' informs him Von Jagow has divided into three groups : those that can at once be accepted, those which may be made the object of discussion and lastly those which are incapable of realization. Among the latter, he continues, is included "our proposition concerning Monastir." We cannot help sympathizing with Constantine over this. After all, it was his betrayal of Serbia which led to her downfall ; and now he is not even allowed (if I may be permitted the expression) his "fair share of the swag." If you take the trouble to murder your friend, it is most unfair that a third person should be allowed to come up and deprive you of your friend's valuables. But this is not all : there is yet more disagreeable news for the King. For the German Staff are doubtful "whether it may not be better to renounce for the present any actions against the troops of the Entente in Salonica and to limit themselves to a defensive action." Perhaps after all it is better to let sleeping dogs lie. Still, we cannot help feeling sorry for Tino, who finds his services are not required.

In the next document of importance, dated March 23, 1916, Constantine accepts provisionally the surrender of Rupel to Germany. It is rather difficult

to reconcile this with the subsequent statement, after its surrender on May 28rd, that the attack was a 'surprise' attack. But no doubt Tino had forgotten all about his wire in March.

In number 52, dated June 26th (after the acceptance by Greece of the Entente Note demanding the dismissal of Skoulouides, the dissolution of the Chamber and the demobilization of the Greek Army), Berlin expresses its anxiety lest that horrid man Venizelos "come out victorious at the elections, and this might lead to very painful consequences both from the internal and external points of view." Certainly the "consequences" would be most "painful!" Berlin also regrets the departure of M. Skoulouides "who had won their confidence and esteem."

In No. 54, dated July 19th, Berlin expresses anxiety about the journeys of Prince Nicholas and Prince Andrew of Greece to Petrograd and London. Germany is relieved to hear that these journeys have only a dynastic and not a political significance. Surely the Kaiser will understand this: for has he not in the past paid many such a visit to England, to assure his dear grandmother, or his dear uncle, of his peaceful intentions!

In No. 61, dated December 6th, Falkenhausen, the German General, tells the Queen to advise Metaxas to develop, as soon as possible, the question of the irregular bands, who were to cut the Salonica-Monastir railway and harass Sarraïl's line of communications in the event of a German attack.

We were distinctly informed by Constantine on several occasions that he had never even heard of the existence of these irregular bands. As we have noted before, the poor King's memory was certainly most defective.

In No. 62, of the same date, Sophie sends her brother William a graphic account of the events of December 1st and 2nd. "The page has been turned. It was a great victory against four Great Powers. (This apparently refers to the attack of 20,000 Greeks on 2,000 Anglo-French marines.) "The Mayor has been imprisoned. Many arrests have been made. The panic has subsided. The health of all is good, great nervous tension." But the note of jubilation over the "great victory" gives way at the end to a note of anxiety, "Please inform us when the Army of Macedonia will be sufficiently reinforced to undertake the definite offensive."

In No. 66, dated December 16th, comes the Kaiser's reply to his dear sister. He begins by expressing his gratitude (as well he might), and he concludes as follows: "There is no other course open to Tino but to revolt openly against his executioners. The intervention of Tino with his principal forces operating against the west wing of Sarraïl will bring the decision in Macedonia. The operations in Roumania have been crowned with the capture of Bucharest. Up to the present God has helped. He will also be with you in the future and will help

you too. Hearty greetings and best wishes. I am thinking constantly of you and Tino.

“WILLIAM.”

One cannot help being struck with the Kaiser's generosity. Let Tino come in with his Army and pick the chestnuts out of the fire, and he, the Kaiser, will allow Tino a share in his God!

In No. 60, dated December 23rd, Berlin sends instructions to Sophie, and also a slight warning. “One should not lose sight of the fact that even the unofficial actions of (Greek) bands will powerfully help Greece, during the peace negotiations, to advance territorial claims. These claims, naturally, could be more considerable in case of action than in case of simple neutrality.” Naturally.

No. 71, dated December 26th, contains a slight disappointment for the Kaiser. Sophie is quite willing to attack the Entente, but is rather nervous. “The issue you advise would be the only one possible if Sarraïl, attacked by you, should be obliged to retreat, in which case his left wing would penetrate close to the parts of Greece occupied by us. As things are now, since the distance separating the wing from us is very great, the line of our communications would be too much exposed and our stocks of food and munitions would not be sufficient for the long struggle. Under these circumstances a decisive and prompt attack on your part, if it is possible, would give to Greece, militarily, the opportunity to intervene.

and would mean for us the deliverance from the horrible situation in which we are." We see the difficulty. Brother and sister are both anxious that the other should attack first. I am reminded (if I may say so without impiety) of two small comedians trying to knock down the villain. "You hit him first." "No, *you* hit him." And unfortunately in the end neither of them will take the plunge.

No. 73, dated December 31st, reveals the continued anxiety of Sophie. "The blockade continues. . . . It is absolutely necessary that we should know whether or not the offensive action on the Macedonian front will begin, and when, in order that we may arrange our plans accordingly." Sophie is plainly becoming a little impatient.

No. 74, dated January 1, 1917, contains a joint appeal from Tino and Sophie to the Kaiser. "The situation is very serious: there is bread for only fourteen days. The (Entente) Note is impertinent: they wish to starve us to death, and by continuing the blockade to impose their demands. Without food supplies, the situation is desperate." What a piteous appeal! Surely the Kaiser's heart will bleed (as it did for Louvain) at the plight of his poor sister and brother-in-law!

The next day (No. 75) the Queen wires to Falkenhäusen. "I consider the game as lost, if the attack does not take place immediately; it will be too late afterwards."

The next message, dated January 6th, No. 76,

is from Tino to Hindenburg, who had apparently sounded him on the strength of the Royalist Army. We must confess the result is rather disappointing : all Tino can spare for an attack on the Entente is two and a half divisions ; and it is doubtful whether even they will be able to reach the appointed place. On the other hand Tino is most anxious for Hindenburg to begin. " It is desirable that we should be informed at once whether a German attack on the Macedonian front is in prospect and when it will probably begin."

No. 77, of January 9th, I regard as the most tragic of all : for it marks the final abandonment of the joint enterprise of brother and sister. As I feared, the comedians can't make up their minds, and the villain gets away. However, I will give Sophie's message to her brother in full.

" Thank you heartily for your telegram, but lacking sufficient food supplies for the duration of such an enterprise, as well as munitions and many other things, we are unfortunately compelled to abstain from an offensive. You can realize my situation ! How much I suffer ! I thank you from my heart for your loving words. MAY THE INFAMOUS PIGS RECEIVE THE PUNISHMENT THEY DESERVE ! I embrace you affectionately. Your isolated and afflicted sister, who hopes for better times.

" SOPHIE."

I have taken the liberty of printing one sentence



in large letters, because I feel it must have been some consolation to William to learn from it that his sister was a true Hohenzollern. 'Infamous pigs' has the true imperial ring about it. But, as I say, the situation is none the less tragic, for the brave family venture has been definitely abandoned; and in No. 79, dated January 10th, we get a further explanation from Sophie to her brother of the reasons for its abandonment. "Particularly the want of heavy artillery in order to (capture) the fortified and prepared positions of our enemies in the narrow passes to the north of Thessaly . . . compelled us, with regret, to renounce the project." At this point, at the risk of intrusion, I fear I must be personal, for quite unwittingly I'm afraid I contributed in a small way to impede the family adventure. The chief pass referred to was the Petra Pass, and the brigade to which I was then attached advanced from Salonica to hold it. I should like to take this opportunity of tendering my apologies to Sophie for my unwarranted interference in her plans. But to return after this digression—the Queen, although impeded, is not powerless. "I hope you will not lose sight of the fact that Greece, in pursuit of our plans, if united by railway, could, on account of her geographical position, become a useful and precious aid to our beloved Fatherland. Among the people we shall always continue to work in favour of Germany against our enemies. You can be positively sure of this and I am proud that the indescribable sufferings

and anxieties we have undergone and continue to undergo for the maintenance of neutrality have enabled us to render important services. Affectionately,  
" SOPHIE."

Surely Sophie has struck the true note of patriotism, for she has made it clear that she is fully prepared to sacrifice Greece, the country over which she reigns, to the interests of the Fatherland. And yet evilly disposed persons like the traitor Venizelos have dared to cast doubts on her patriotism !

The next message, No. 80, dated January 12th, I hesitate to print, for it has a nasty treacherous flavour, and I feel sure that Queen Sophie never read it. It is from brother ' N ' in Berlin to brother ' J ' in Athens, and runs as follows : " I have seen M. Zimmermann and have insisted that the attack should begin as soon as possible, telling him we desire finally to know clearly whether this offensive will take place. He replied that personally he was in favour of this offensive, but that all depended on Field-Marshal Von Hindenburg, to whom he had referred the matter. If the reply is dilatory, I think that we ought to act according to our own interests, without taking into account any other considerations, in view of the fact that we have already made sacrifices enough and cannot ruin the dynasty and the country for the beautiful eyes (illegible words)." Oh ! brother ' N,' how could you ! You dare to suggest that you have sacrificed enough and that you

cannot ruin the country and the dynasty for the Queen's beautiful eyes! This is rank treachery; for what does it matter if Greece is ruined, so long as Sophie can help her brother? 'You have said that you should be sorry for.'

Clearly there is disillusionment in Athens: even the Queen is angry. No. 82, dated January 13th, from Sophie to Falkenhausen, is very petulant: "Had the reply of Field-Marshal Von Hindenburg been more favourable and categorical, the Crown Council would have decided for the attack. I am broken-hearted! It is too, too bad! They have blundered!" I confess this comes rather as a shock to me. I was well aware that the miserable Englishmen had 'blundered' often enough: the *Daily Mail* told me so nearly every day. But I had always imagined that 'blunder' was a word unknown in the German vocabulary. But here we have the assurance of a Hohenzollern that the Germans too have 'blundered'—and surely a Hohenzollern must know! I agree with the Queen that it is "too, too bad!" Really it is a thing like this which makes one almost despair of the human race.

No. 85, dated January 19th, from the Queen to Falkenhausen, contains a hint which the latter acted upon with exemplary promptitude. The Entente were very short of aeroplanes—many machines had been broken. Here was an opportunity for the Germans to molest those 'infamous pigs'! Here again I must intrude a personal note. On the strength

of the Queen's secret information, Falkenhausen sent for the famous German bombing squadron, known as the 'Circus,' which for two months gave us no peace. I remember on one occasion—but this isn't a 'War' book. Still, anyway, I feel that Sophie and I are about 'square.' I, unwittingly, blocked her way in the Petra Pass: and she unwittingly too, I have no doubt, gave me many a *mauvais quart d'heure*.

No. 86, dated January 20th, contains the acceptance by Tino of Hindenburg's proposition that, on the assurance that Germany will compensate him after the War, Tino shall destroy all the Greek war material in the Peloponnesus, to prevent it falling into the hands of the Entente. I wonder if any demand has been made by ex-King Constantine (in Switzerland) to ex-Kaiser Wilhelm (in Holland) for the promised 'compensation': and what form, if any, it will take. Perhaps the ex-Kaiser will send the ex-King a few logs of wood from the trees which he has cut down in Amerongen. I'm told that it is very cold in Switzerland; and I'm sure Tino will be glad of them, especially now that the 'infamous pigs' have stopped his allowance.

No. 87, dated January 26th, conveys the King and Queen's birthday message to the Kaiser. From the ending, we gather that the sensitive Queen has been somewhat upset. Were she a lesser woman, we might almost say she was in one of her tantrums! "May God give you a glorious victory over all

your infamous enemies ! They have honoured us by the landing of forty Senegalese soldiers, in order to guard the Legation of France. A charming picture of civilization ! Affectionate greetings.

“TINO. SOPHIE.”

I should like to make just two comments on this. First, the repetition of the word ‘infamous’ argues a certain lack of originality about the Queen’s vocabulary, or possibly it merely indicates, as I have hinted, that she is in one of her ‘tantrums.’ It is certainly a charming peculiarity of the Hohenzollern’s family correspondence that, when things are not going exactly ‘according to plan,’ they are inclined to vilify their enemies. My second observation concerns the Queen’s remark, “A charming picture of civilization !” I don’t know much about irony, but I feel almost certain that this remark is meant to be ironical. Yes, I feel sure that what the Queen really meant was that the ‘picture’ was not ‘charming’—was, in fact, quite the reverse.

Here, unfortunately, so far as the brother and sister are concerned, ends the correspondence. But there are just four more documents (90–93) on which I should like to comment. The first from brother ‘N’, dated January 21, 1916, mentions that “the Kaiser has brought away from an interview with the King of Bulgaria the certainty that both the King of Bulgaria and the Bulgarian Government are animated by really sincere intentions as to the regula-

tion of the relations between Greece and Bulgaria." This communication is addressed to M. Gryparis, Minister of Greece at Vienna. The second from brother 'N,' dated April 3, 1916, to M. Skouloudes, Prime Minister at Athens, vehemently denies certain baseless allegations which have recently emanated from the Greek Legation at Vienna, to the effect that Germany has consented to cede certain Greek territory to Bulgaria. On the contrary, "The Central Empires have always made it a principle to declare to Bulgaria, even before she became their Ally, that they would never consent to discuss the possibility of compensations made at the expense of Greece."

The third and fourth, dated April 11th and September 24th, come from M. Gryparis at Vienna to the Greek Government at Athens. In both Gryparis expresses his firm conviction that he is right in alleging, and the Greek Legation at Berlin wrong in denying, the promises made by Germany to Bulgaria of compensation at the expense of Greece. It is not for me to express an opinion; my readers who have followed the general trend of German and Bulgarian politics must decide for themselves whether M. Gryparis or M. 'N' Theotokes is likely to have been the better informed.

At this point I must reluctantly leave this delightful family correspondence, as the rest has been unfortunately lost. As I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, Sophie expressed a desire, after the War,

to visit Eastbourne. If this should chance to meet the eye of any lodging-house keeper in that beautiful spot who is anxious to entertain the Ex-Queen, I shall be delighted to transmit the offer to Sophie "through the usual channels."

## CHAPTER II

# CONSTANTINE'S VIOLATION OF THE CONSTITUTION

**I**T has always been contended by the Royalists even to this day that on no occasion did the ex-King violate the Greek constitution: and although constitutional questions are necessarily somewhat tedious, it is essential for a fuller understanding of Greek politics that we should examine in detail this contention, which is propounded clearly in the speech of M. Stratos to the Greek Chamber of August 23, 1917, and which was refuted equally clearly by M. Kafantares on the following day and by other speakers in this memorable debate.<sup>1</sup>

The strong democratic feeling that has always existed in Greece is revealed by the history of the country in the last century: that is, since it has obtained its emancipation from Turkish rule. The Constituent Assembly of 1844 decided unanimously on a liberal constitution, having as its prototype that which existed in England, and which may be termed monarchical democracy. Its characteristic, as we know, is one and fundamental: that the King is

<sup>1</sup> See "Vindication of Greek National Policy," *passim*.



a mere transmitter of the public will, and that all political authority is centred in the hands of the people and of the House and Government emanating from it. The Greek Chamber and the Council of Ministers headed by the President of the Council correspond exactly with the British House of Commons and the Cabinet headed by the Prime Minister.

Twenty-one years of bitter experience of the Bavarian dynasty, which had been thrust upon them, showed the Greek people how the Constitution could be circumvented by the interference of an irresponsible ruler in the management of common affairs; and they did not hesitate for a moment in 1863 to proceed to a new Revolution, and, by removing from Greece the dynasty which had defrauded them of their liberty, to consolidate their Government on a sure democratic foundation. So jealous indeed were they of their freedom that they rejected the institution of the Second Chamber, or House of Lords, lest it should weaken the people's authority; for they preferred to face the danger of a "parliamentary oligarchy," which the supporters of the Second Chamber threatened, rather than to see the people's sovereign authority checked by any extraneous and uncontrolled body. Thus Greece cemented her political liberties in 1863, as England had done in 1649: and it is not necessary to define further in detail a Constitution which, with the exception just recorded, is exactly like our own. But

it is worth mentioning that the Greek nation, to show their appreciation of England, 'the cradle of parliamentary institutions,' and to show further on what lines they wished to be governed, unanimously elected as their King in 1863 a son of Queen Victoria. The jealousy of the other Powers, however, vetoed the free choice of the nation, and forced upon it the Danish Prince George.

So much is admitted even by the Royalists : and we may take for granted that if any act is admittedly a violation of the British, it is also a violation of the Greek, Constitution. If we bear this in mind, we can go on to enquire into certain specific acts of the King, and to examine their legality by the test ; whether or not such acts would be considered legal if they had been done by the King of England.

The first test-case is the action of Constantine in dismissing Venizelos in March 1915 and dissolving the Chamber, although the Prime Minister enjoyed the confidence of the country, as expressed in a large parliamentary majority. It may be accepted as a general principle that if the people, from whom all authority flows, elect certain representatives to carry out their will, and that if these representatives support in turn a Ministry from among their number, then the Ministry cannot be ejected from office as long as it enjoys a parliamentary majority, and that the House cannot be dissolved until the natural termination of its life. But are there any peculiar

exceptions to this general rule? Let us hear first what Stratos has to say, in defence of the King's action.

Stratos informs us that the King has the right to dissolve the Chamber in five different cases: which are—

- (1) The natural termination of the life of the House ;
- (2) The inability of the House to form a viable Government ;
- (3) The necessity for renewing the House for the better sanction of its work ;
- (4) The lack of harmony presumed between public opinion and the majority in the House ;
- (5) The dissension of the Crown from the Government supported by the House.

Of these the first two may be termed automatic dissolutions, and are inevitable. The third is common enough in England, and is employed by the Government in power, either because they think it a favourable opportunity to hold a General Election, or because they wish to 'renew their mandate' before embarking on unusual legislation. The fourth case differs from the third, in that the impulse to dissolve a Government supported by a majority comes, not from the Government itself, but from the King. (Clearly Kafantares, by bracketing the two together, is in error.) We must examine this case rather carefully, and quote precedents, because it brings us to the

border-line between legality and illegality, and because this right of the King has been rarely exercised and fiercely questioned. Professor Dicey, who is acknowledged to be our greatest authority on the subject, divides "The law of the Constitution" into two parts: the first, constitutional law, which is written law, or judge-made law; the second, the Conventions of the Constitution, as established by custom and precedent, and which, although less clearly defined than written law, are none the less binding. Among these 'conventions' (which chiefly concern the 'prerogative' of the King and of the House of Lords) he discusses this very right of the King: the right of Dissolution, if the King has reason to believe that lack of harmony exists between public opinion and the majority in the House. He points out that this right has only been exercised twice in the course of English history: by George III in 1784 and by William IV in 1834. In the first instance George III was proved by the Elections which followed the Dissolution to have been correct in his surmise, that the country no longer extended their support to the majority in Parliament: in the second instance William IV was proved by the same test to have been mistaken. Thus, Professor Dicey, although admitting this exercise of the royal prerogative, considers that it should only be used under the most exceptional and abnormal circumstances; and that even then it can only be justified, if it is a correct interpretation of the will of the people. Finally with regard to

Greek history, we may note that this right of dissolution has been exercised twice, in 1892 and in 1895. On both occasions Greece was in the throes of a terrible crisis, and King George decided—correctly, as the subsequent elections proved—that the majority in the House did not enjoy popular support.

The fifth case, the right of the King to dissolve the House, because he personally disapproves of the policy of the Government supported by a majority in the House, is altogether unknown and without precedent either in Greece or in any other country governed on similar lines. The King is entitled to use persuasion if he thinks that the Government are pursuing a dangerous course of action: but that he should be allowed to dismiss a Ministry, simply because of his personal dislike of their policy, is at variance with, and indeed directly opposed to, the fundamental basis of the Constitution: the sovereign authority of the electorate.

Under which of these headings does the dissolution of March 1915 come? If it came under the fourth heading, there would still be a case for Constantine. He could say, "I dismissed Venizelos from office because I honestly believed that the majority of the country was opposed to his policy of taking part in the Dardanelles Expedition. It is true that the subsequent elections prove that I was wrong: and that the majority were in favour of intervention. But we are none of us infallible; and I only made the same mistake as William IV of England." But

the fact is, neither Constantine nor any of his apologists have ever made this defence of his action in dismissing Venizelos: for they realize the absurdity of the pretence that the people were not behind their Prime Minister. Never had Venizelos enjoyed greater popularity than at this time: throughout the whole of the country there were enthusiastic demonstrations of support, to give the lie to this pretence. Moreover, Constantine had not only to guide him the will of the majority, but also the will of the minority, which was in agreement with the rest of the nation. For at the two Crown Councils of March 4th and 5th not only were there present the leaders of the Liberal Party, but also the leaders of the other minority parties represented in the House, who unanimously sanctioned the policy which the Prime Minister had brought in. No, it is clear that the King's excusers can only justify his action under the fifth heading, by inventing a new and unheard-of 'convention,' whereby the arbitrary will of the King can prevail against the united will of the nation. If this 'convention' is admitted, one might as well tear up the Constitution at once, and throw it into the waste-paper basket, for the sovereignty of the people has ceased to exist.

We come next to the second question—the delay in recalling the chosen representative of the people. Venizelos was dismissed on March 5th: and he was not summoned to power again till August 23rd. Thus for nearly six months the sovereignty of the

people was inoperative. What excuse have the King's apologists for this breach of the Constitution ?

First, we are told, the Government of Venizelos had not any electoral lists printed, and had not provided any apparatus for the new Provinces. On that account the 'interim' Government of Gounares, although it undertook the task of repairing these omissions "with all haste," could not have everything ready before June 13th, the day the elections were held. But even if we accept this rather flimsy pretext, and are prepared to believe that the work was undertaken "with all haste," yet we have only a partial answer to our question. The elections were held on June 13th, but Venizelos was not recalled to power till August 23rd. Thus for two months and more, notwithstanding the clear results of the elections, the Government, which had been rejected by the people, directed the fate of the nation : and the Liberal Party, which had been returned to power, were excluded from office. What explanation can be given of this violation of the Constitution ?

The King was ill, we are told, and the shock of an interview with Venizelos and of the discussion of a new policy, would have killed him. But this excuse is absurd, for the possible illness of the King was an emergency against which the Constitution had provided, by laying down that in such a case the heir to the throne must become Regent. Moreover, when the Liberal Party called the Government's attention to this article of the Constitution, they were

denounced as regicides, and their proceeding was labelled "impious, unholy, unseemly, and unmanly!" But surely no one imagined that it was possible to postpone the legal functions of the State, and that the Government of the country should be paralysed, just because the King was ill! No argument or counter-accusation of impiety can hide the fact that the King, by rendering inoperative for nearly six months the sovereignty of the people, was guilty of a second gross violation of the Constitution.

We come now to the third question—the second dismissal of Venizelos in October 1915 and the dissolution of the recently elected Chamber in December. If the first dissolution of the Chamber was illegal, what of the second? I am reminded of Lady Bracknell's remark in "The Importance of Being Earnest": "To lose one parent, Mr. Worthing, may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose both looks like carelessness." Even if there were some possible excuse for the first dissolution, on the grounds that the King was not quite certain of the wishes of his people, what possible excuse could there be for the second dissolution, when the wishes of the people had been so clearly and so recently expressed? Let us examine the reasons given us by the King's apologists.

Firstly we are told that Venizelos' majority had been considerably reduced at the last elections; and that "Wars cannot be decided on by small majorities." (The actual returns were: Venizelists



184; all other parties 126.) If we overlook the fact that Venizelos' majority had been reduced by the simple method of 'cooking' the Macedonian elections, and by degrading the King to the position of Party-leader of the Opposition; even so we cannot for a moment admit that "Wars cannot be decided on by small majorities." For where are we to draw the line in that case? At what precise point can it be said "The majority is now sufficient. Let us go to war!" This argument is absurd. It is universally admitted that Parliamentary Government means Government by the majority: and, indeed, unless this were admitted, it would be impossible for the Government to govern.

Next, we are told, although the majority of the country supported the Liberals at the June elections, and had shown their approval of intervention in the Dardanelles, they had not been consulted and they had not expressed themselves in the new and special circumstances which had arisen in October concerning the validity of the Serbian treaty, as to whether Greece was bound to go to the assistance of Serbia when she was attacked by Bulgaria; not in a local war, but in alliance with other great countries not Balkan. But this defence is a mere quibble founded on a flat contradiction of the truth. As can be seen in the speeches delivered at the elections by Venizelos' followers, the issue raised by the Liberals was not whether or not Greece should now intervene in the Dardanelles; for it was recognized that owing

to the King's action, the opportunity had been lost. The issue raised was clear enough : " It is no longer possible for Greece to take part in the Dardanelles Expedition, but if another suitable opportunity offers itself to the country to fight by the side of the Entente, do you wish us to take it ? Above all, do you wish us to assist Serbia, if Bulgaria attacks her ? " And the answer to both these questions was ' Yes.' In denying that this issue was made clear, the Royalists are guilty of a falsehood : in pretending that even if the people accepted the validity of the Serbian treaty in principle, yet the circumstances were peculiar, in that Bulgaria was acting in co-operation with Germany, they are making use of an absurd quibble. For who could have supposed for a moment that if Bulgaria were to invade Serbia, she would act independently of the Austro-German Armies also invading her ? Surely this quibble scarcely needs refuting.

And again, if it can remotely be supposed that in the spirit of the Greek Constitution there really existed the necessity that the people should be asked on every special occasion, on every detail in critical circumstances, to give their vote, the Constitution would be reduced to an absurdity. For the people would vote only, and the King would govern !

Lastly, we are told that the King wanted to know for certain whether the people were in favour of assisting Serbia. But he was perfectly well aware that if Greece broke her treaty, Serbia would be dead and buried long before the elections were over.

Such was the case : the newly elected House which was to decide whether or not Serbia should be assisted, met on the 20th January, and at the end of the previous October Serbia had ceased to exist !

Thus on three important occasions Constantine tore the Constitution to shreds. If he did not openly violate it after 1915, it was because by the illegal elections of December, from which the Liberal Party was compelled to abstain, both as a protest and because of the impossibility of securing a fair verdict, he was enabled, through a servile Chamber, to legalize outwardly the illegality of his actions. But in truth, if the spirit of the Constitution means that the will of the majority must prevail, then Constantine violated it a thousand times during those eighteen months of bitter shame.

But the King's apologists, acting on the assumption that two blacks make a white, have 'defended' him, if we can call it a defence, as follows : "It is all very well," they say, "for Venizelos and the Entente to talk about violating the Constitution—why they have done it themselves ! The Entente violated it by interfering in the internal affairs of Greece, and deposing the King. Venizelos violated it by reassembling on June 27th the Chamber which had been dissolved in November 1915. So at least we can cry 'quits' !" Although, even if it were true, this would be a poor sort of apology, I should like, before concluding the chapter, to say a word on the subject of these two charges.

The intervention of the Entente in June 1917 is a question of international relations: and it is impossible to deal fully with it in so short a space. I think, however, that as the country which suffered, or benefited, by our interference was Greece, the opinion of Greece's greatest statesman is worth recording.<sup>1</sup> "The Powers who founded the Greek State established it, indeed, as an independent state; but though they declared in the first instrument at the time of Otho's election that they established it as an independent and monarchical State, in the second instrument at the time of the election of King George, they took care to add that they guaranteed it as monarchical, independent, and CONSTITUTIONAL. This guarantee of the Powers has furnished Greece with protection for a whole century. But never except in these circumstances has an occasion been presented for general exercise of the rights, which the three Powers derive from that guarantee. And even if the texts of these treaties had never existed, and if these Powers had not been the benefactors and guarantors and protectors of Greece, but had only been responsible for the conduct of this Great War with the aims which they had in view, and, finding themselves on our territory, had seen a King exercising authority based on a democratic constitution, turning tyrant and persecuting and enslaving a large part of his people, pursuing a policy which revolted the conscience of the public, refusing

<sup>1</sup> *Vindication of Greek National Policy*, pp. 140-141

to respect the manifestation of popular sovereignty and the verdict of the elections, and affirming his own responsibility before God ; do you think that these Powers, even if the texts of the treaties had not existed, would not have sought to exert their beneficent influence on behalf of those who were struggling for liberty ? ” If this is the answer of the great Greek patriot, we need not surely trouble to frame an answer for ourselves.

As to the second point, the reassembling of the Chamber which had been dissolved, it is certainly without precedent in the annals of Greek parliamentary jurisprudence. But no other course was possible ; for the Chamber which had been elected in December 1915 was illegal ; and at the time of Venizelos' return it was impossible to hold new elections. Consequently his Government were faced with the dilemma, either of appropriating to itself temporarily all political authority, or of recalling the Chamber elected in June 1915. A somewhat analogous dilemma has arisen in other countries governed by parliamentary representation, such as England : because the life of parliament came to an end, and owing to the war it was impossible to hold the elections. Instead of dissolving the House, it was considered preferable to extend the duration of its life. In Greece the anomalies, thanks to despotic rule, were greater ; and the necessity was consequently more imperative. But for the suppression of the Constitution, the Chamber of June 1915 would have been

legally maintained till 1919; so that the question of its restoration was simply a matter of form.

Venizelos himself had stronger views still on this matter: and his concluding remarks on the subject may be recorded.<sup>1</sup> "Nevertheless," he says, "it is my duty to inform the House that even if I had thought it possible to hold a General Election immediately, I should still have refused to take office without this condition: I should still have insisted that the Chamber of June 13th must be recalled, in order to continue its labours; in order to continue I should have said, the sitting of the 13th November 1915. I should have insisted on the recall of this House to work for some time at least; if only to furnish the political history of Greece with one clear precedent, which may serve as a lesson to future generations."

<sup>1</sup> *Vindication of Greek National Policy*, p. 156.

go to their assistance. But, as we know, Venizelos was dismissed on October 5th, and on October 12th, in response to a request from Serbia to put the Treaty into operation as the *casus foederis* had now arisen, M. Zaimes in a telegram<sup>1</sup> to the Greek Minister in Serbia, expressed his 'deep regret' that the Greek Government could not accede to this request. Let us analyse and dispose of, one by one, his reasons for considering that the *casus foederis* had not arisen, and that Greece was not bound by the Treaty to come to Serbia's assistance.

(1) The Alliance had a purely Balkan character; and "is invalid in the vicissitudes of a general conflagration." The untruth of this statement is so manifest that we are tempted to believe that it would never have been advanced, had it been known that the Treaty, which was then secret, would one day be published. The opening clause, mentioned above, expressly stipulates against a "Third Power." We know now that in the first convention "against Bulgaria" was the phrase used. But Serbia in anticipation of what had actually occurred—an Austrian attack—had insisted that "a third Power" should be substituted for this: and in the second draft of the Convention Venizelos, seeing that an Austrian attack would inevitably lead to a European war, in which Greece would have Russia and France as allies, had agreed to this.

(2) "Nowhere in the Treaty is there any question

<sup>1</sup> White Book I, No. 34.

of a combined attack by two or several powers," consequently, as it was not a question of an attack by Bulgaria singly, but by Bulgaria in co-operation with Germany and Austria, the Treaty is not binding. This is an absurd quibble and is sufficiently answered in the Serbian reply :<sup>1</sup> "The spirit of the Treaty of Alliance which guaranteed the integrity of the territory of each of the contracting States in case of attack, no less than its text, in which there is no mention of the Treaty ceasing to have any obligatory force if Bulgaria is in alliance with any other Power, proves, in a clear and logical manner, that Greece is bound to come to the assistance of Serbia if she is, without provocation on her part, attacked either by Bulgaria or any other Power."

(3) "The Serbian Government has already recognized that it has the character of merely an episode in the European War, by breaking off diplomatic relations with Bulgaria in imitation of the Entente Powers, their European Allies, without having previously come to an agreement with Greece, their Balkan Ally. It is thus clear that we shall not find ourselves to be within either the provisions or the spirit of our Alliance." This argument is disposed of by the reply of the Serbian Government that "she did not come to an understanding with Greece with regard to the rupture of diplomatic relations with Bulgaria for the simple reason that she had no choice in the matter, and it did not rest with her

<sup>1</sup> White Book I, No. 38.



either to break off or maintain the relations. The rupture was rendered inevitable by the aggressive attitude of Bulgaria."

(4) But, apart from these "textual considerations," Greece does not think that by sending assistance now to Serbia, she would be serving "their common interests." It was for this reason that she had hitherto remained neutral, "believing that the best service she could render Serbia was to keep Bulgaria in check, by preserving, in view of an eventual attack, the integrity of her forces and the liberty of her communications. Greece has always held herself ready to face the Bulgarian danger, even if it took place during the European War, in spite of the fact that Serbia was already engaged with two Great Powers. That is why she responded to the Bulgarian mobilization, by mobilizing her own army. But she has always had in view a Bulgarian attack taking place separately, even if in connection with other hostile enterprises against Serbia. The hypothesis of a concerted attack between Bulgaria and the other Powers has been and must remain outside her calculations. For, by intervening under such circumstances, Greece would destroy herself without any hope of saving Serbia. . . . The common interest therefore demands that the Greek forces should be kept in reserve with a view to making better use of them later."

In this monstrous rigmarole there are three suggestions which engage our attention. Firstly there is

the broad hint that Venizelos himself had been guided by the theory of 'practicability' in August 1914; and that, in failing to render assistance to Serbia against Austria, he had virtually torn up the Treaty. Consequently in still remaining neutral Greece is only following out the policy of Venizelos to its logical conclusion. But this disgraceful suggestion does not take into consideration that in August 1914 Venizelos, **WITH THE APPROVAL OF SERBIA**, decided that the common interest and the execution of the Treaty demanded a certain policy: viz. that Greece should remain neutral for the present, and should only intervene, if Bulgaria attacked Serbia. Thus he was not violating the Treaty but actually consulting his Ally on the best method of carrying it out.

Secondly, we find perhaps the most amazing 'distinction without a difference' that has ever appeared in any official document. Greece was quite ready, we are told, to intervene, if Bulgaria attacked Serbia "in connection with" the Austro-Germans; but it had never occurred to her that if they attacked 'in connection with' each other, they would make a "concerted" attack; and under those circumstances Greece couldn't possibly intervene! What, in God's name, is the difference between a 'connected' and a 'concerted' attack? What person in their senses even imagined that if Bulgaria decided to attack Serbia at the same time as the Austro-Germans attacked her, she could possibly

avoid 'concerting' her attack? And yet the poor Greek Government never thought that this could possibly happen!

Lastly, we are told that it would not serve the "common interests" for Greece to be destroyed, in a hopeless attempt to save Serbia; but that she had much better keep her Army for a better occasion. But what 'better occasion' could offer itself, as far as their 'common interests' were concerned, once Serbia had been destroyed, as she assuredly would be, if Greece did not help her? This is really too much—it is as if Henry VIII had said to Anne Boleyn: "You ask me to stay your execution? Well no, I really don't think that it would serve our 'common interests' for me to do so. But later, after your execution, I'm sure that I shall be able to find a more suitable opportunity to help you!" There was absolutely no reason to believe, as I have shown in another place, that Greece would destroy herself by coming to the rescue, or that there was no hope of saving Serbia. On the contrary all the military probabilities pointed that the exact opposite would be the result of her intervention. But even if Greece did run risks by intervening, was that a reason for breaking the Treaty? We are beginning to see what exactly is meant by "common interests"—its only meaning is "the interests of ourselves," and we get the theory of treaty obligations which was advanced even more boldly by Stratos in his defence of the Royalist action, which he made in the

Chamber on August 23, 1917. Put bluntly, it comes to this: "We can repudiate our Treaty obligations, if it is not in our interests to fulfil them!"

But there is just one further remark which attracts our attention: the admission that Greece was bound by the treaty to keep Bulgaria 'in check.' The following conversation which took place between Passaroff and Constantine in September 1915, gives us the King of Greece's idea of keeping Bulgaria 'in check.' This conversation, I may add, was sent to Sofia by Passaroff, then Bulgarian Minister at Athens, in a telegram, which was discovered at the Athens telegraphic office, and has recently been deciphered by means of the Bulgarian cipher, which fell into the hands of the Entente when they confiscated the archives of the Bulgarian Consulate at Salonica in 1916.<sup>1</sup>

"The King asked me for what reasons Bulgarian divisions had been mobilized.

"I replied that the mobilization had been carried out as a rejoinder to the concentration of Serbian troops on the Bulgarian frontier.

"The King said—"I was told yesterday of persecutions against Greeks in Serbian Macedonia. The Serbians are incorrigible, with their cruelties. M. Venizelos thinks that you mean by your mobilization to occupy Macedonia, Nish, Pirot, and the Morava Valley. The occupation of Macedonia would constitute a *casus foederis* according to the Treaty

<sup>1</sup> *Vindication of Greek National Policy*, p. 62.

between Greece and Serbia. The occupation of Nish, Pirot, and the Morava Valley would destroy the equilibrium of the Balkans.'

"To this I replied—'The occupation of Serbian Macedonia does not constitute a *casus foederis* for Greece. The Greco-Serbian Alliance against Bulgaria can no longer exist, for one of the parties is no longer in a condition to fulfil the obligations of Alliance. If the Bulgarians attack you Serbia will not be able to send you a single soldier. As for Pirot, Nish, and the Morava Valley, it is a question of Serbian intrigues. The policy of M. Venizelos in regard to the equilibrium of the Balkans is negative and sterile. It is impossible to arrest the progress of the Bulgarian people, young, industrious, full of life, and capable. Its neighbours must not impede its progress. While the British were occupying themselves with sport, the French with the theatre, and the Russians with vodka, Germans were working, and we see them accomplishing miracles.'

"The King said—'I am in full agreement with you, and I hold that when you go to occupy Serbian Macedonia, we shall have no reasons to intervene, since the *casus foederis* cannot apply after what you have heard. We cannot oppose such a course, for we should have to declare war for foreign territory. You are going to act now with Austria and Germany. It would therefore be suicide if in opposing you, we were to declare war against two great Powers. I did not agree to the proposal of M. Venizelos that

we should oppose you with our troops and with those of the Entente, for if the Entente has plenty of troops it will send them against the Dardanelles and not against Bulgaria. I beg you to declare to His Majesty your Tsar that in your action against Serbia you will have no opposition from our side. We shall not shed our blood against you and against Germany to save Serbia. Please assure your Sovereign and your Government that I have summoned you in order to make this declaration to you, and to ask you the following service—M. Venizelos is endeavouring to prepare difficulties and even disagreeable *coups de théâtre* for me. I want to deprive him of the possibility of making a show with the *casus foederis* regarding Serbia. I, therefore, request you to declare to the Minister of Foreign Affairs here on behalf of your Government that you have nothing against peace, and to declare that you will occupy Serbian Macedonia acting in conjunction with Germany. M. Venizelos demands from me the mobilization of two Army Corps on your frontier. I shall not consent.'

"Finally, the King asked me to help him in his struggle to get rid of M. Venizelos quietly. The King asks that his declaration shall remain an absolute secret."

Such, then, were Constantine's real views on the validity of the Treaty, and on the part he should play in 'checking' Bulgaria! Zaimes himself, who actually drafted the note to Serbia, refusing assist-

ance, would not even take the trouble to examine the Treaty, as he had only come into power to fall in with the King's wishes and to repudiate it. There is absolutely no excuse for the Royalists, for neither the spirit nor the text of the Treaty gave them a reason for repudiating that which none of them had ever dared to question till the very last moment. In conclusion, I should like to cite the noble words of Polites<sup>1</sup> on the subject of Treaty obligations.

"The repudiation of a treaty, Gentlemen, is a heavy blow, struck by the Government of a country, whoever they may be, against the honour, the dignity, the prestige of a State. The blow is heavy for any one. If the Power is a great one, it will endure the consequences. But a small Power must care more for its honour, must have greater reverence for the obligations it undertakes. Because the Great Powers have material possessions, they have force. But in the case of Small Powers, the only indestructible capital they possess, the only thing that permits them to live in the community of nations, to progress, to vindicate their national rights, to realize their national dreams, is honour."

<sup>1</sup> *Vindication of Greek National Policy*, p. 62.

## CHAPTER IV

### TWO ROYALIST PAMPHLETS

**R**ECENTLY, through the kindness of a friend, I have been allowed to read two pamphlets which were published towards the end of the War by 'L'Union Hellenique de Suisse.' They are written in French and they emanate from Geneva. The first, *Le départ du roi Constantin*, is an account of the events from June 10-14, 1917; which may be described as the almost simultaneous arrival in Athens of M. Jonnart, the Allied High Commissioner, and departure from the same town of King Constantine. Unfortunately, I have not got a copy before me; but I made a few notes at the time, and I will endeavour to give my readers the substance of this pamphlet. I do not know whether this little work is procurable in England; but if any of my readers understands French, and is interested in humorous fiction, I recommend him to endeavour at once to obtain a copy.

First of all, we are given a pretty little picture of the absolute concord and tender love which existed in Athens between King Constantine and the Entente, before the arrival of that wretched fellow M. Jonnart.



The prophet Isaiah has given us in one of his prophecies a vision of an age of perfect peace when 'the cow and the bear shall feed ; their young ones shall lie down together ; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den.' But this is pandemonium compared with the blessed age of peace which now ruled over Athens. As to the question of the Thessalian crop, there was no truth in the slanderous allegation of the newspapers that Constantine desired to keep it all, so as to be in a position to snap his fingers at the blockade. On the contrary a "complete agreement" on this question had been reached between the Entente Ministers and the King. M. Guillemin had been to see the King and had stated that he was in full agreement with the Greek point of view not only in this matter but in respect of the whole policy of Constantine during the War. This millennium of bliss was suddenly disturbed on June 10th by the arrival of a certain gentleman, a M. Jonnart, at the Piraeus, who had apparently been taking a trip for his health in the Mediterranean on board the French battleship *Justice*, and had just visited Salonica—a town of which Constantine had vaguely heard mention. But no one knew anything about him ; neither the King, nor M. Guillemin.

It was, therefore, with great surprise that M. Zaimes, the Prime Minister, learnt that this M. Jonnart desired the pleasure of his company forth-

with on the French battleship. Still with that unfailing courtesy which the King and his Ministers have always extended to strangers visiting Greece, he proceeded without delay to the battleship. M. Jonnart informed him that he had been sent to Greece with unlimited authority as High Commissioner of the three Protecting Powers, who had guaranteed the Greek Constitution of 1863; to wit, France, England and Russia. He emphasized the fact that he had no desire to interfere with the Greek Constitution or to upset the Danish dynasty; but that he was only animated by a sincere desire for Greece's welfare, and that his object was to unite her once again. M. Zaimes was naturally thunder-struck. How could it be suggested that Greece was not united at present? The whole country was behind the King, with the exception of a few madmen under the leadership of a pernicious rebel, whose name—here he consulted a few notes—he believed to be Venizelos. If the High Commissioner wished the unity of Greece to be absolutely complete, he had only to throw Venizelos and his handful of followers into prison; and the job would be done.

But M. Jonnart was not persuaded by this perfectly reasonable statement: instead of replying, he made the suggestion that Gounares, Dousmanes, Metaxas, and a few others should be exiled from Greece. M. Zaimes, who seemed destined, directly he had recovered from one blow, to be sent reeling under another, pointed out that this was quite impossible.

There might be some machinery in existence in Athens for exiling Venizelos, but he was quite certain that none existed for ostracising such worthy gentlemen as the Ex-Chief of Staff. So the matter was dropped for the time being, but M. Jonnart insisted on obtaining written permission from the Premier for the Entente troops to occupy certain towns in Thessaly, pending the settlement of the question of the Thessalian harvest. M. Zaimes (the writer's stock of verbs expressing sorrowful amazement approached exhaustion) was dumbfounded. Had not this matter already been settled? But being a man of extraordinary moderation, he consented to the request. M. Jonnart then concluded the interview with the promise that he would communicate with him on the morrow, by which time he would have received certain definite instructions from Paris.

That night there was consternation in Athens alike in the royal palace and in the humblest cottage. The fears, however, of his faithful people were allayed by the King's proclamation, assuring them that, like Mrs. Micawber, he would never desert them.

On the morrow the Prime Minister was again sent for and at 9 a.m. he was presented with an ultimatum from the Entente, demanding the abdication of King Constantine within twenty-four hours. His successor was to be designed by the King from among his heirs; but the Crown Prince was expressly excluded from the succession. The Powers claimed their

authority for the demand from article three of the Treaty of London, dated July 1865, which reads as follows: "Greece under the sovereignty of Prince William of Denmark" (known afterwards as King George, the father of Constantine), "and under the guarantee of the three Courts of England, France and Russia, forms a monarchical, independent, and constitutional State." The special significance of the word 'constitutional' was apparent, in that it had not been included in the first Greek Constitution of 1844, which had only been described as 'monarchical and independent.' Constantine, having on several occasions broken the constitution guaranteed by him to them, the Three Powers were compelled to intervene and to demand his abdication. Later on, however, if the Greek people desired it, there would be no objection to the return of the King. M. Zaimis, who was by this time, if I may use the expression, completely 'bowled over,' left the ship as in a trance, and directed his footsteps almost unconsciously to the Royal Palace, where (still in a trance—the same trance) he presented the ultimatum to the King. Never was the King more kingly, never was his simplicity more simple, never was his dignity more dignified, than when he received this terrible blow. A Crown Council was at once summoned, and the King laid before them the ultimatum, and asked their advice. The Crown Council deliberated for two hours. Some of them, recalling the thousand insults heaped on Greece

by the infamous Entente—the landing at Salonica, the almost weekly ultimata, the bottling up of the Greek Army in the Peloponnese, and the blockade—advised him to summon to his side the Greek nation, who would answer the call to a man. Others again, perhaps because they feared that there might be one or two replies of ‘Number engaged’ in answer to the call, advised less heroic measures. Let the King follow the example of his rather less famous prototype Napoleon, and hand himself over a prisoner to the Entente. The *Justice* was every whit as good a ship as the *Bellerophon*; and by refusing to accept the ultimatum, he would throw on the Entente the onus of enforcing it. The King listened with that dignity, which I have mentioned before, and which I am afraid I shall have to mention again, to the advice of his faithful councillors; and finally announced his decision to accept the ultimatum. He had, he remarked modestly, performed certain services to Greece in the past; he had nearly doubled his country by his brilliant leadership and staff-work during the two Balkan Wars, and he had personally saved her from the disaster of intervention in the present conflict. But his past services were as nothing compared with those which he was now prepared to render. He named no names, and invited no comparison: but he was determined to go to his Calvary, to make the supreme sacrifice of tearing himself away from the bosom of his loving people. He would consent to die (metaphorically speaking,

of course)—nay, he was determined to die, that Greece might live. With these words the royal martyr signed his death-warrant.

My own opinion is that the unknown writer of the pamphlet (who signs himself 'X') should have ended it there. The subsequent details of the embarkation of the royal luggage savours rather of anti-climax. But the duty of an historian is to record the true facts; he must not kill Napoleon on the glorious field of Waterloo, but he must tell also of the shame of St. Helena. Moreover, there is one picture from which the writer extracts a certain pathos: the High Commissioner, in the guise of a twentieth-century Hudson Lowe, brutally curtailing the last sleep of the royal martyrs in their native land by ordering them to embark before 11 a.m. Perhaps 'native' is not strictly accurate, seeing that the Ex-King was Danish, and the Ex-Queen German. Still, if that picture doesn't make you cry, you ought to consult a doctor.

There is also an extraordinarily moving description of the grief of the populace, when the terrible news became known to them. As I said, unfortunately I haven't got a copy by me as I write: but I remember distinctly one passage, in which the writer positively lashed himself into poetic frenzy. I can't remember the words, but there was a wonderful simile of the "leaden dawn breaking," and the "leaden" feet of the populace (also "breaking," I suppose) "as they wended their way on the last

pilgrimage to the royal palace at Tatoi." But, frankly, I was rather disappointed that the author failed to record the incident which I read of in the papers at the time; of a famous actor, the George Robey of Athens, swimming out after the royal yacht *Sphacteria*, and trying to bring it back to shore. Still I suppose one mustn't be greedy.

But if *Le départ de roi Constantine* appeals to sentiment, and would indeed form an excellent libretto for a Lyceum melodrama, the second pamphlet, entitled *Le guet-apens du 1<sup>er</sup> Decembre 1916 à Athènes*, is of sterner stuff, and makes an appeal, not to the senses, but to reason. It is full of facts and documents (the authenticity of which I have unfortunately been unable to verify) destined to correct certain misapprehensions existing in our minds concerning the 'trap' of December 1st, and the 'persecutions' of Venizelists which are alleged to have taken place on the following day. I will try to summarize the conclusions as briefly as possible.

(1) The original demand of the Entente that a certain quantity of Greek war material should be handed over to them in compensation for the corresponding quantity which had fallen into German hands as a result of the capture of Kavalla, Rupel, etc., was made in the autumn of 1916.

(2) The Greek Government replied that although they were not responsible for the material falling into the hands of Germany, they were prepared out of kindness to accede to the principle of 'ship-

for-ship' compensation. But, by an elaborate table, comparing the material, etc., which had already fallen into the hands of the Entente from the Salonica defences, etc., with the material which had been captured by their enemies, it was found that the Entente had already in their possession more Greek guns, more rifles, and more machine-guns than the Germans. So far therefore from being entitled to take more Greek material, the Entente should really give back the balance. On this, however, the Greek Government, to prove the sincere benevolence of its neutrality, would not insist. It is worth noting that in its calculation of the Greek armament in German hands, the Greek Government do not include the material of the 'interned' Greek Corps at Goerlitz. Naturally the Germans would allow their 'guests' to keep their arms.

(3) The Entente would not accept these calculations; and informed the Greek Government that unless the arms were delivered by a certain date, they would be compelled to make a demonstration at Athens and to seize them, if necessary, by force.

(4) The Greek Government replied that they would consider such a demonstration as an 'act of hostility'; and they issued a vehement protest in anticipation.

(5) In spite of this, Admiral Dartige de Fournet landed a large force of Anglo-French marines on the Piraeus on December 1st, with clear orders to use force, if necessary, and to seize all the important positions commanding the town of Athens. The



Greek troops were given orders on no account to fire unless they were fired upon first. Unfortunately on meeting with the Greek troops, some of the Entente marines opened fire; and a skirmish followed in which both sides suffered about 150 casualties. Meanwhile the Entente warships opened fire on the town of Athens, having as their principal objective the Royal Palace. Shortly after an armistice was concluded, and the marines were escorted back to the Piraeus, where they re-embarked. It was therefore absurd to talk of any 'trap.'

(6) A number of Venizelists, armed with rifles, had fired from their houses on the loyal Greek troops, at the time when the skirmish was going on. Accordingly on the following day, the 2nd, a raid was made on the house of Venizelos and other 'suspect' houses. A large quantity of arms and grenades were found there, and in consequence the Greek Government arrested a few of the leading Venizelists.

(7) The pamphlet concludes with a list of about 150 Anglo-French 'police' in Athens, who, in violation of the Greek neutrality, were openly employed by the Entente for nefarious purposes. Against each name—all the names are Greek—there is a description of the man's character, certified by the Chief of the Athenian Police. Among the milder descriptions we may note the recurrence of 'Thief,' 'White slave trafficker,' 'murderer' and 'sentenced to imprisonment on such-and-such a date.' Altogether, one would gather, as unsavoury a collection of

ragamuffins as have ever gathered together in one town.

I was so impressed with this manly and straightforward account of events, that I proceeded at once to lay it before official Venizelist circles, and asked them what they had to say about it. The replies, given under the same seven headings, are as follows :

(1) The actual suggestion that the Greeks should compensate us for the material lost to Germany came, not from the Entente, but from Constantine himself, who made the proposal to the French Deputy, Benazet, on October 21st.

(2) The statistics are incorrect, because the material of the ' interned ' Greek Corps is not included in the list of material in German possession. Apart from other minor inaccuracies, it is pointed out that much of the material already in the possession of the Entente was obsolete and useless.

(3) and (4) What actually occurred was this : Although the King himself had suggested the concession, he was afterwards persuaded that he should not have done so. He therefore privately informed the Entente that it would be better for them to make a ' demonstration ' at Athens, in order that there should be no suspicion of his connivance. His real object was this : directly the demonstration began, the Greek troops would think that the surrender of the material was involuntary, and would be certain to prepare for resistance. The King could then tell the Entente that it would be almost certain

to provoke a conflict, if the material were surrendered. Thus he hoped to preserve both his honour and his batteries.

(5) In accordance with this plan, Admiral Dartige de Fournet, never suspecting that there would be any resistance, landed 2,000 marines at the Piraeus on December 1st. These marines had been served out with blank cartridges, and had only a small number of rounds of 'live' ammunition. On the very morning the Crown Prince had gone round the barracks and had informed the Greek troops that it was intended to rob them of their guns and rifles, and had exhorted them to destroy their enemies utterly 'so that no trace even of their nostrils remained.' Accordingly the marines were surrounded on their way to Athens by over 20,000 Greek troops, who fired on them. After suffering heavy casualties, the Anglo-French force, including Dartige de Fournet, was compelled to surrender to the Greeks. In view of the fire of the fleet which was directed not against the town itself, but against the barracks and fortifications surrounding it, the Greeks agreed to an armistice; and the Anglo-French marines rejoined their fleet. With regard to the allegation that the marines fired first, it is pointed out that not only were their rifles loaded with blank cartridges, but that it would have been sheer folly for a small force to attack a force more than ten times stronger, by which it was surrounded.

(6) This encounter was made an excuse to imprison

or exterminate all the political enemies of the Crown. In addition to a number of Venizelists who were butchered in cold blood, many hundreds were imprisoned on the flimsiest pretexts, and were kept in solitary confinement under conditions of indescribable barbarity. They were only released 45 days later on account of the categorical demand of the Entente ultimatum, which was accepted on January 16th.

(7) If it is true that the Anglo-French 'police' were such disreputable persons, that is because the Germans had secured the rest.

My readers are now in possession of the two conflicting statements, and they must decide for themselves which they are to believe. I should like to add just one thing more, which may possibly enlighten them. I have recently seen a copy of a Greek paper which is being published in America by the Royalists. On the front page there is a large portrait of Constantine, and underneath, in huge print, the date "December 1, 1916," which is proclaimed as the date of Greece's regeneration, and of her "greatest victory." Now this seems to me very strange. For if the Royalists were honestly anxious to avoid a conflict, and if, as they have given us to suppose, they sincerely regretted this incident which had been forced upon them, and if they were really our friends, how can they describe the events of December 1, 1916, as "Greece's greatest victory"? I confess that I can find no answer to my question.

## CHAPTER V

### CONSTANTINE AND HIS ADVISERS

**C**ONTINUAL reference has been made in the first part of the book to a certain powerful section of Constantine's advisers, whom I have referred to as, the 'Court' party, the 'secret advisers,' 'the power behind the throne,' the 'backstairs party,' 'the Royalists,' etc. These names do not necessarily mean that the influence of this party was wholly bad and at variance with the true interests of Greece (though I hope to prove that such indeed was the effect of their influence). I meant rather that their advice was unconstitutional: for the constitutional adviser of the Crown can only be the Prime Minister and his Cabinet, who are the true and only representatives of the will of the people. They only are entitled to influence and direct the policy of the King. It remains for us to discuss who were these secret advisers, what were their motives in acting as they did; and finally to determine whether or not the policy which they advocated, and succeeded for a long time in enforcing, was in the best interests of Greece. Of these three objectives, the first and third are easily attainable: for we

know who they were ; and we know what they succeeded in bringing about, and we are therefore entitled to condemn or to praise their policy, according as it appears to us to be at variance with, or to have served, the true interests of the country to which they belonged. That is the only true test by which they can be judged ; and it is a test which any man, who knows how to draw conclusions, can apply. When Venizelos left office for the second time, he made this memorable remark, " You see the Greece I am handing over to you ; be mindful of the Greece you hand on." Were the King's advisers mindful of this warning, or were they not ? That is the question to which we must find an answer.

But our second objective, to discover the different motives by which each separate adviser was influenced, is, I admit, more difficult. At best it can only be a matter for conjecture : since even if we had spoken to each man, and he had told us the influences at work in his mind, we could never be certain of the truth. For often a man acts, without knowing himself why he acts : and among Greeks especially reason is often displaced by emotion. At the present time the leading advisers of the Crown are awaiting trial in Greece on various charges : and no doubt many things, which are at present hidden, will come to light. I must therefore warn my readers that although I have spoken to many persons who are intimately acquainted with the men under discussion, my estimate of the reasons which led them to act

as they did, is largely conjectural, and therefore may be, and probably is, full of inaccuracies. None the less, if the details are incorrect, we may be fairly certain of the broad outlines. I must apologize for this prelude : but I am anxious that the reader shall be able to distinguish what he may take for granted from what he is at liberty to reject.

The chief unconstitutional advisers of the Crown were the Queen, Streit, Dousmanes, and Metaxas. There were also a number of politicians of whom by far the most prominent was Gounares. Among others may be mentioned Zaimes, Ralles and Skouloudes, who, although they did not try to influence the King whilst Venizelos was still Prime Minister, consented afterwards to hold office and to advise him, although they knew that Venizelos had been illegally dismissed. They cannot therefore be excluded from a share in the responsibility of having directed Greek policy into a certain path which was at variance with the wishes of the people, as expressed in their support of Venizelos at the elections. Finally there were the brothers Theotokes ; the one, Greek Minister at Berlin, the other, Master of Ceremonies at the Court of Queen Sophie. These eight names (the last two are not important) fall naturally into three groups : those who advocated a certain policy opposed to that of Venizelos from the very beginning of the War : those who for various reasons, which I will discuss, adopted the policy later : and those who, although they never approved of it, consented

to carry it out. Let us examine each group in turn.

In the first group there are three names : the Queen, Streit, and Dousmanes. Concerning the Queen I need say little ; her correspondence with her brother is dealt with elsewhere, and in it, with the readiness of her sex, she speaks for herself. By a double misfortune of birth, she was born a German and a Hohenzollern. Concerning her motives and her policy there cannot be a shadow of doubt. She utterly despised the Greeks, and cared not a jot for the welfare of Greece. She regarded it only as a pawn in the game to be thrown in and sacrificed without hesitation or compunction, if its sacrifice would help Germany. Her policy was quite straightforward : Greece must remain neutral and help Germany secretly by every means in her power, until an opportunity offered itself for open intervention. When Germany had won the war, Greece would enter the great German confederation of States.

The policy of Streit is similar, though his motives are slightly different. His grandfather, a Bavarian gentleman, had come to Greece in 1844 with King Otto, who had reigned in Greece before the worthless Bavarian dynasty was ejected and George of Denmark came to the throne in 1863. But although both his grandmother and his mother were Greek, the Foreign Minister of Venizelos spoke Greek with a strong guttural accent ; and in his appearance and his



dress he was frankly, one might say ostentatiously, German. A man of considerable experience as a diplomatist, he enjoyed the complete confidence of M. Venizelos. But even before the War he had on several occasions abused this confidence: and had been employed by Constantine to 'watch' the movements of his chief, and to report secretly on all that was done and said.

An informer is not generally a man whose judgment is of much weight, for directly he has performed certain services, he is discarded as a worthless tool. But Streit had become acquainted with the Queen during his frequent visits to the Palace: and that lady, delighted at last to find a German oasis in the desert of surrounding Greeks, had become firmly attached to him. Thanks to the Queen's friendship, his influence was enormous over the King as well. As we have seen it was he who, without the knowledge of the Prime Minister, drafted the famous wire of the King to the Kaiser on August 7, 1914. From that date onwards he worked ceaselessly to further German interests. His policy was thus exactly the same as the Queen: but his motives were slightly different, in that he was not working solely in the cause of Germany, without any reference at all to the interests of Greece. He was devoted to the German Queen and to everything German: but he was also to this extent patriotic, that, unlike her, he would have hesitated deliberately to ruin Greece. He was, however, convinced from the very beginning

that Germany would win : and on that account he was prepared to go to any lengths to win her goodwill. His personal character arouses our contempt : for like most informers, he was a coward. Whenever the Entente sent threatening notes to the King, Streit, unlike the fire-eating General Staff, always counselled acceptance and non-resistance.

General Dousmanes was a man of quite a different stamp. He had never been to Germany, he could not speak a word of German : but none the less he idolized the purely German conception of militarism and autocracy. For him the Kaiser was God, and the Prussian militarists his prophets. For the Entente, with the exception of England, he had the greatest contempt : to the English he only extended his admiration because of the Machiavellian qualities of our foreign politics ! Venizelos he detested for a personal and a general reason ; because he had once been rebuked by him for insubordination, and because Venizelos stood for the cause of democracy which he despised. His one ambition was to convert Greece, which in a peculiar way of his own he loved, into a small edition of Germany ; and to make Constantine a full-blooded autocrat and a worthy brother-in-law of the Kaiser. Never for a moment did he doubt that Germany would be victorious : for he had the greatest contempt for the military capabilities of the Entente : as it simply did not occur to him as possible that democracy and efficiency in war could go hand in hand. We get some idea of his attitude

from his sneering jibe at the Salonica Force : " The only two men who will remain neutral during the War are King Constantine and General Sarraïl ! " With such views, but from different motives the Chief of Staff found himself in the same camp as the Queen and Streit, and from the beginning, he stuck at nothing which might help Germany.

The second group—those who adopted a pro-German policy after the beginning of the War—included Gounares, Skouloudes, Ralles, and Metaxas. Of these Gounares was inspired chiefly by a deep-seated jealousy of Venizelos. At first he had no bias in favour of Germany : indeed he was altogether in favour of Greece siding with the Entente. But when the Dardanelles crisis arose, he saw his political opportunity to oust his hated rival from power : and he did not hesitate to take it. By doing so he inevitably joined the Queen's party : but he did so not out of love for Germany, so much as hatred of Venizelos. It is not certain whether he knew of the message sent to Germany on July 30, 1915, informing her that Greece would stand aside in the event of a Bulgarian attack on Serbia. But he was Prime Minister at the time : and it is fair to assume that he had a fairly shrewd knowledge of what was taking place. In any case this bland, Pecksniffian lawyer was a faithful adherent, if not a strenuous instigator, of the Court policy.

The case of Ralles is somewhat different. At the time of the Dardanelles crisis he was a firm supporter

of Venizelos. It was he who said to the King at the Crown Council, "Courage, your Majesty, courage," and to the Prime Minister, "Sir, it is your duty to go forward." But after the crisis he changed his mind, and decided that the King had been right, and Venizelos wrong. The diplomatic errors of the Entente and the military victories of Germany overcame his infirm purpose. Moreover, he was always secretly jealous of Venizelos, whom he despised for his humble birth. Those who desire to do so may read the speech<sup>1</sup> which he made in the Chamber on August 25, 1917, defending his policy. His defence, which is not very convincing, seems to be that he was fond of the King, and that, since Venizelos had been dismissed, he might as well take office as any one else. Clearly this rather light-minded snob was only cast for secondary parts in the royal entourage.

The character and motives of Skouloudes do not require much explanation: he was a man of eighty-two, fired with the ambitions of twenty-one. He was a follower and not a leader of the Court party: in order to satisfy his ambitions, he was prepared to do anything that he was told. In so far as he had any personal feelings in the matter, he heartily disliked the Entente and Venizelos with the impotent hatred of a doddering old man.

Colonel Metaxas was probably the ablest by far of all the Court Party. He had been brought up in

<sup>1</sup> *Vindication of Greek National Policy*, pp. 183-220.

Germany, where he was known as the "little Moltke"; and was, moreover, a personal friend of the Kaiser, who is said to have remarked, "If I had five men like Metaxas, I could conquer the world." But in spite of this, he believed at the beginning that Germany would be beaten (perhaps for the very reason that it did not possess "five Metaxas") and he set to work to draw up plans for the capture of the Dardanelles. I have never seen them: but a very high authority has told me that they were extraordinarily brilliant, and that they displayed an unrivalled appreciation of the strategic position. However that may be, they were, as we know, contemptuously rejected by the British authorities. (Rumour has it that Winston Churchill is responsible for this.) From that day onwards implacable animosity against the Entente drove him into the German camp. Thus his better judgment was warped by personal considerations: and he became obsessed with the one idea. "The Entente despise me. Very well, whatever happens, I will teach them how dangerous I can be."

We come last to Zaimes. How came it that this man, who, after Venizelos, was undoubtedly the best politician in Greece, and who had rendered his country many distinguished services, how came it that he is found in the German camp? I do not believe that he ever approved of the policy of the Court. Even if he had believed that the end justified the means, and that Germany was bound to win, a man of his integrity could

never have approved of all the dirty tricks and the mean lying which this policy necessitated. But the fact is, that he was devoted to the King; and he was too lazy or too weak to oppose what he believed to be wrong. "What is the use of reading all these documents about the Serbian treaty, seeing that I have come into office on purpose to repudiate it?" That is the answer to the question why an upright man found himself among such strange companions: "There is no use in my resisting." He forgot, when he became the Minister of the Crown, that he was still the servant of the people.

These then are the King's advisers, and these are their motives. But without a certain amount of popular support, a mere handful of men could never have succeeded in accomplishing as much as they did. Behind them, however, there were a number of supporters, growing constantly as the War went on, and we must pause for a moment to enquire what manner of men they were. Those who loved their King more than anything else; those who feared for their skins, and were prepared to go to any length to avoid war; those who had received German money, or had been won over by German threats; those who were disgusted with the Entente; those who were jealous of Venizelos; those who were convinced of German invincibility; and those who cared more for their purses than for their honour—such were the men who supported the policy of the Court,

and but for whom that policy could never have been carried out.

It is not difficult to see what this policy was : the answer is written plainly in the pages of Greek war history. At all costs we must keep out of the war. If necessary (and it was necessary) we must break our treaties ; we must lie and dissimulate constantly : we must hand over Greek territory to our bitterest enemy : we must grovel before Germany : we must submit to every humiliation imposed on us by either group of belligerents : we must crush the people physically and morally : but nothing else matters so long as we can keep out of the War, and help Germany. What justification was there for following a policy which necessitated such shame and humiliation ? Let us even put aside the moral question, whether they were justified in sacrificing the nation's honour : let us put aside the legal question, whether they were justified in overruling the will of the people in a country governed by a constitutional monarchy : let us accept the theory that if they considered that the object for which they were striving was in the interests of their country, it matters not by what means they attain it ; and then what justification is there for their policy ? These men boasted that at least they had prevented Greece from engaging in an unsuccessful war. But let us consider what was the result of their policy : ten months mobilization, the Bulgarian invasion of Eastern Macedonia, the laying waste

of Greek Macedonia, the imprisonment of an Army Corps, the annihilation of Hellenism in Asia Minor, the suppression of every noble sentiment, the propagation of fear and cowardice—are not these the very results which would have followed an unsuccessful war? At least if they had followed a German policy, they might have asked for Greece from their taskmasters not indeed an accession of territory and wealth, but at any rate the preservation of what she already had. Again, they boasted that they had prevented a war with Bulgaria: but even this cannot be admitted. They had only postponed it to a later date, when Bulgaria, laden with the spoils of this war, would have fallen on Greece, weakened, divided and without a single ally.

It is not a sufficient answer for the Court Party to say now: "We are very sorry: we put our money on the wrong horse. That is the only error that we have committed." It is not a sufficient answer, because even if Germany *had* won, the position of Greece would have been intolerable. Germany had promised them nothing for their assistance: and she would have given them nothing. The fact is that the policy which they pursued, and the object which they strove to obtain, was not the furtherance of Greek aims, but the furtherance of German aims, and German aims only. For this reason these men stand openly revealed as traitors to their country.

'Traitor' is perhaps a hard word: and it is pro-



bable that all these men, with the possible exception of Streit, had they been able to gaze into the future, not indeed so as to see the defeat of Germany, but so as to see the inevitable consequences of their policy, the shameful disasters of 1915 and 1916—it is probable I say, that they would have acted differently at the beginning. But it is unfortunately true—and nowhere is the truth more plainly revealed than here—that the descent to Avernus is easy. The betrayal of Greece was the inevitable corollary of the betrayal of Serbia: and those who had set foot on the downward path, could no longer withdraw, but were carried down into the abyss.

And what of the King, the central figure around whom all these persons revolved? In a former work<sup>1</sup> I attempted to trace his evolution, and I compared him with the central figure in an old Greek tragedy: a man with many good qualities but with certain fatal streaks in his character, who is pursued by a ‘curse’ which plays upon his weaknesses, and eventually leads him to disaster: and I quoted Macaulay’s epitaph on Clive: “Fortune placed him in a situation in which his weaknesses covered him with disgrace, and in which his accomplishments brought him no honour.” Since I wrote this, I have learnt a great deal more about him, but nothing to shake my belief that at the beginning of the War he meant honestly to do his duty, and to rule as a

<sup>1</sup> *The Salonica Side-show*: Chapter on ‘The Tragedy of Constantine’

constitutional king. There are however one or two additions I should like to make to my former estimate of his character.

Much has been made of his telegram to the Kaiser, sent three days after the beginning of the War, to which I have already referred on several occasions ; and it has been accepted by many as a conclusive proof that already at this early period he belonged to Germany, body and soul. But it is my opinion that too much importance should not be attached to this message : for we know that it did not originate with Constantine, but was drafted by Streit. At that time Europe was in a ferment : and it was not known from one moment to another what would happen next. The Kaiser had wired to him that Roumania, Bulgaria and Turkey were coming in at once on his side ; and if this were true, it behoved Greece to walk with great circumspection. In the circumstances it was not unnatural that the King should approve of, and sign, a wire, which, under more normal circumstances, he would have condemned as far too gushing. But a snatch of conversation has been repeated to me by an English lady who was herself present at the time, which convinces me that the King's sympathies were not with Germany till much later.

The incident, to which I refer, took place on the King's yacht as late as the beginning of 1915. The King and Queen were on deck, when his younger son Alexander, the present King, dashed up to his

father and informed him joyously that "Three more damned German boats had been sunk!" A broad smile lit up the King's face: but, noticing his wife's indignation, he signalled to his son to keep quiet. Now even if we admit that the King's smile may have been for the benefit of the English lady, and concealed his real feelings; yet the very fact that Alexander, who was only a boy and could not possibly have 'acted a part,' thought it natural to come to his father and to 'crow' over a German defeat, seems to me conclusive evidence of Constantine's attitude at that time towards Germany.

In truth the King was an extraordinarily weak man. We learn from Venizelos himself that on several occasions Constantine was profoundly moved by his words, and was definitely persuaded to fight for the Entente. But unfortunately the moment that Venizelos had left, Streit, who was the King's evil genius, or Dousmanes, would talk to him, and destroy all the seeds that the Prime Minister had sown. The contest was unequal, because Venizelos was always honest and spoke the truth, however unpalatable it might be: whereas his opponents did not hesitate to lie to the King, to flatter him, and to play on his weaknesses with exquisite skill. None the less they were anxious about him for a long time: and it was found necessary, whenever Venizelos came to see him, to keep some one secreted behind the door, to listen to everything that was said. In the end, of course, they landed their fish:

and after that he never ceased to struggle. Although he began to be attracted by the bait as early as March, the actual date on which he was 'landed' is uncertain. Possibly it was on July 30, 1915, when he made his secret declaration of neutrality: but personally I am inclined to think it was a little later, and that, even during Venizelos' second Ministry, there was still a tiny hope that he would turn round on his secret advisers. However that may be, with the dismissal of Venizelos on October 5th all hope of saner counsels prevailing disappeared. From that day onwards till the end of his reign Constantine clung to the fatal policy on which he had at length decided, with that peculiar tenacity and determination, which only a really weak man can display.

The bitterest opponents of the King do not deny the charm of the man. Unfortunately a pleasant disposition and charming manners, though admirable in a private individual, are a totally inadequate equipment for a King: and it is for this reason that the return of Constantine to-day would be nothing short of a national disaster for the country, which he so very nearly brought to ruin.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE GREEK PEOPLE

**M**R. CHESTERTON, in his brilliant history of England, complains that in all the so-called 'Histories of the English People' there is no mention of the English people. This little book does not profess to be a study of the Greek people during the War; it is only a slight sketch of the protagonists in Greek War Politics. None the less it would not be complete without an attempt to appreciate the part played by the Greek people: and, if it is found that we have hitherto done them an injustice, to offer an apology. Perhaps the most pernicious and disquieting legacy of the War has been a continual feeling of irritation, of suspicion, and of bitterness between nation and nation. This mutual antagonism needs no illustration: one can see it and hear it every day. During the War it was more or less suppressed: for every sane man felt that he must support his Allies, even if he did not see eye to eye with them in every matter, because they were his Allies, and oppose his enemies, even if in certain

respects he had a bond of sympathy with them, because they were his enemies. It was only against neutrals that he expressed his feelings violently and openly. Then the War came to an end, and the torrent of mutual resentment, bottled up so long, was let loose. I think the press, though actuated by the best motives, have done an immense amount of harm in this respect. It was considered rightly that differences should not be concealed, and that they would admit of easier settlement, if brought out into the light of day. But unfortunately this theory was carried to an extreme: and to-day every little difference of opinion between two nations is magnified into the proportions, if I may be permitted the expression, of a 'first-class row.' The average man is peaceable enough: but when he opens his paper and discovers that some nation has done his country an intolerable wrong, he begins to labour under a grievance: and all the trouble and misunderstandings begin. If I may take just one example, that of Italy, I think it is fair to say that the present unfortunate position has arisen very largely through the excessive candour of the press, not only in Italy, but in England, France and America as well. Whatever opinion one may hold concerning the Fiume question, it is monstrous that a comparatively small matter should be allowed to develop to such enormous proportions, that it is in danger of bringing about an international crisis of the gravest nature. At the beginning the difference of opinion was small

and capable of settlement : but it grew and grew like a snowball with the masses of newspaper sheets applied to it and encircling it ; till the small snowball, no bigger than a man's hand, is now large enough to knock over the Entente, and smash its very foundations. Thousands of persons, who, but for the Press, would never have heard of Fiume, have been spurred on by the newspapers till they are prepared to go to war over a question, concerning the justice or injustice of which they have only the vaguest conception.

The Army, too, have been partly responsible for this exacerbation of international relations. It is an almost universal practice to disparage our Allies both as soldiers and as men. The unconscious argument of the soldier who has returned to England from abroad seems to be this. "After what I've seen abroad, I've come to the conclusion that England is the best place, and the Englishman the best man and the best fighter in the world." This is true, and there is no harm in saying so. But the soldier won't say it openly : he hates the idea of boasting. So he says instead, "I think so-and-so (whatever country he has soldiered in) is a rotten country. The people are rotten, and they can't fight for little apples." No doubt this comes to the same in the end : but it creates rather a bitter feeling of resentment that other countries haven't done their fair share in the War. I have only singled out the English soldier, because I was one myself, and because I

share the responsibility. But it is clearly the same in other countries as well.

The Greek people have been more abused, probably, than any other race for their conduct during the War. I was in Marseilles in December 1916 on my way out to Salonica, when the news came through of the massacre of the Anglo-French marines at Athens. I shall never forget the indignation aroused by the news. So bitter was the feeling that the large Greek colony in Marseilles, though they had publicly disavowed and condemned Constantine's actions, scarcely dared to show themselves in the street. So far from being prejudiced in their favour, I remember cursing the Fate which was sending me to such a vile country and to such a vile people. Since then I have had to revise my opinion of the Greek people (though not of the Greek province of Macedonia). The reasons for my recantation are two-fold: I have met and liked many Greeks in the Greek Army, and I have become acquainted with a few facts concerning the part they played during the War. My own personal views are valueless, but the facts, which I will give, speak for themselves.

It is a difficult thing to define public opinion. But there can be no doubt that from the outbreak of war till the dismissal of Venizelos in March 1915 the public opinion of the vast majority of Greeks was altogether in favour of coming into the War on the side of the Entente. Not all of them, of course, understood why they ought to come in. I don't



pretend for a moment that they all understood the high ideals of the Entente or the vile behaviour of Germany. Of course they didn't : but they were ready to follow their King and Venizelos wherever they were led. The 'moral' of the country was excellent. They had emerged victorious from two wars, and they were ready and eager to attack Bulgaria or Turkey again, if they were given the chance. Except for a few Staff Officers and perhaps half-a-dozen politicians, there was hardly a pro-German in Greece. They knew that England and France had always supported, and that Germany had always opposed, their aspirations, and so they had no love for Germany.

But the eagerly awaited call to arms did not come. In the beginning of March the Greek nation learnt with consternation that Venizelos had disagreed with the King and had resigned. What had happened ? It was easy enough to follow the King whom they loved, and Venizelos whom they loved, when they were together. But now a break had occurred, and they were worried and anxious. At the same time Baron Schenk arrived in Athens and began his pro-German and anti-national propaganda. He started in a small way, buying up a few Greek papers and bribing a few unimportant officials at Court.

For the next three months, until the elections, the 'interim' Prime Minister, supported by the King and by Baron Schenk, did all in his power to

undermine the confidence of the country in Venizelos. His secret memorandum to the King in which he suggested ceding the newly acquired provinces of Drama-Kavalla to Bulgaria in return for concessions in Asia Minor, was published. The Entente failure in the Dardanelles was loudly proclaimed, with the obvious moral. "See what your King has saved you from! That madman Venizelos wished to drag us into the expedition—only your wise and noble King saved you from sharing in the ruin of the expedition." The bad faith of the Entente was loudly advertised. "All the time they are flirting with our enemies, the Bulgarians. They will not even guarantee the integrity of Greece, for fear of discouraging Bulgaria." Much too was made of the German victories, and a belief in the invincibility of Germany began to take root among the more timorous Greeks. Then the King fell ill: and Gounares made this an excuse to postpone the elections. Venizelos replied that if the King was really so ill, the Constitution had provided for a Regent, so that the business of the country should not be paralyzed. "Hark to this impious man!" shrieked Gounares to the people. "He wishes to kill your King! I tell you that every vote cast for Venizelos is a bullet directed at the heart of your King!"

On June 13th the elections took place. Constantine had openly abandoned the impartiality of a constitutional monarch, and had become a party leader. It was not a question of 'Gounares or Venizelos?'

It was a clear-cut issue, 'Venizelos or the King?' The Liberal Party did not shrink from the issue. They proclaimed frankly that they had been justified in desiring to join the Entente. The opportunity of joining in the attack on the Dardanelles had been thrown away. But so soon as another opportunity presented itself they would come in. They did not conceal for a moment their intention, if Serbia was attacked by Bulgaria, of coming to her assistance and counter-attacking Bulgaria.

Such was the issue: and the result of the elections is amazing. In old Greece the Venizelists won an overwhelming majority of seats. In the newly acquired provinces of Macedonia they only saved 4 seats out of 73! In the latter provinces Admiral Goudas had succeeded in 'cooking' most of the elections: a large number of the voters moreover had seen their country fought over twice in the last four years, and were naturally disinclined for another War. Still, in spite of the Macedonian debacle, the Venizelists had on the whole a large majority, having won 184 seats against 126 seats won by all the parties in opposition. No clearer proof of the real sentiments of the Greek people can be needed than this.

Having clearly shown their determination, the Greek people sat down to await their opportunity to intervene. On September 22nd the opportunity came. The Bulgarians mobilized, and the following day Greece followed suit. It was not yet generally

known that Venizelos and the King were once again in disagreement: and the order to mobilize was joyfully received, and obeyed with remarkable rapidity. But the poison of pro-Germanism had already begun to work in the Army, especially among the officers. On October 5th Venizelos was dismissed for a second time: and Serbia was left to her fate. The Anglo-French troops arrived in Salonica: and instead of finding the Greek Army ready and eager to co-operate with them, they were met, for the most part, with sullen looks. Many of the Greek officers, instead of welcoming us as guests, treated us as intruders, and wilfully obstructed our every movement. Others, it is true, were more friendly and hospitable. But unfortunately one remembers an injury, where one forgets a kindness: and it was during these first few weeks of the Entente landing that there sprung up that hostility to Greece, of which the traces still linger.

October 5th was a black-letter day in the history of the Greek people: yet it is difficult to see how they could have avoided this disgrace which their alien King has thrust on them. I have discussed elsewhere the reasons why Venizelos did not openly lead a revolution and call on the Greek people to abandon their King. Had he done so, it is certain that three-quarters of the Army and the people would have answered the call. Some, a mere handful, through fear of Germany: others for love of their King: others through mistrust of the Entente:

others who loved money more than they loved their country : others again who hated or feared to take the final plunge—these formed but a fraction of the country. All that the others needed was a leader. But there was no leader save Venizelos, and he could not take the risk. For if it is true that the Greek people are easily led, it is equally true unfortunately that they have no other leaders but Venizelos. In discussing the responsibility of Zaimes, Venizelos himself remarked in the Greek Chamber, “I do not wish to depreciate his great gifts and attainments in a country which unfortunately, if I may say so without offence, is suffering from a temporary lack of leading men.”

So the opportunity passed, and for a whole year the Greek people were unable to make their voice heard. Only once at the end of August 1916 when the Greek Corps was ‘taken prisoner’ at Kavalla, the spirit of the country was shown in the refusal of 2,000 men under Colonel Christodoulos to surrender. Thus in the Army, the stronghold of Royalism, almost a quarter of the men concerned revolted against their infamous leaders and betook themselves, thanks to the British Navy, to Salonica, where they were destined to form the nucleus of Venizelos’ Greek Army of National Defence. This year, from October 1915 till October 1916, when Venizelos landed at Salonica, was a year of unrelieved gloom for the Greek people. For nine months, until in June the Entente enforced demobilization, the Greek

Army was kept mobilized—and inactive. The object of this prolongation was purely political; for, having given guarantees to Germany that Greece would never intervene even if her territory should be invaded, the Royalist Government could not pretend that any military reason necessitated the prolongation of mobilization. The object was plain: to crush the Greek people physically and morally. The Greek Army was taught to hate Venizelos, who had called them up, and but for whom they would have been happy at home, enjoying all the benefits of neutrality in a Great War. Those officers and men whom the Government feared for their uprightness were transferred at will from one end of Greece to another. (In peace time the right to transfer officers belongs only to a Council of Lieutenant-Generals. But under 'war' conditions such as now existed a transfer could be effected by the General Staff.) A regular propaganda was carried on in the barracks. The soldiers were taught not the spirit of self-sacrifice, not the spirit of honour; but they were taught by their own General Staff to regard every noble act with aversion, they were taught to be afraid of war.

Thus it was hoped by the Crown that this monstrous propaganda of panic would be spread by the Army among the whole of the people, so that, even in the event of its enforced abdication, the spirit of the people should be utterly broken. For the greater part of the year, too, the blockade had told heavily

on the health of the Greek nation, who could not understand that the Entente were really their friends. The blockade, although absolutely necessary, won over many Greeks to the side of the King: and the military incapacity of the Entente convinced more and more Greeks that Germany was invincible.

Yet, in spite of all, the heart of the Greek Nation remained sound. In October 1916 Venizelos landed in Salonica and issued his appeal to the Greek people. One is forcibly reminded of another appeal, the appeal to the Roman troops made by Garibaldi after the capture of Rome in 1849. "I am going out from Rome. Let those who wish to continue the war against the stranger come with me. I offer neither pay, nor quarters, nor provisions: I offer hunger, thirst, forced marches, battles and death. Let him who loves his country in his heart and not with his lips only, follow me." Yet many answered the call, and many more were actually prevented by the Entente's proclamation a short time later establishing a neutral zone between new and old Greece, and guaranteeing the King that the followers of Venizelos should not be allowed to penetrate beyond it. In all the Army of National Defence numbered, eight months later, when Greece was reunited, nearly 80,000 men. If we remember that the total strength of the Greek Army is under 300,000, this seems to me to be a very fair proportion—especially when we consider those who were debarred by the Neutral Zone from coming to Salonica. It was

not until December that Venizelos was even 'recognized': and his followers had to put up with many snubs. And all the time they were wondering what would become of their relations in old Greece, for they knew that the Royalists would do all in their power to molest them.

Then at last, on June 12, 1917, the King was forcibly deposed, and Greece was once more reunited. The Royalists confidently believed that, even if the King were removed, 'the evil' that he had done would 'live after him'; but they were disappointed. A number of officers remained loyal to him; but some of them even consented to fight against Germany, whilst retaining their allegiance to their fallen King. Others resigned their commissions, or were dismissed from the service. But an incontestable proof of the general soundness of the Army is the part the Greek Regular Army was destined to play in the War. Once the evil influence of the Court was removed, they shook off the poisonous fumes of German propaganda, and regained their former 'moral.' I do not propose here to estimate the importance of the contribution which the Greek Army made to the final victory; it is enough to say that they fought excellently and did all that was required of them. But for the 200,000 Greeks who were actually on the Macedonian Front in the autumn of 1918, the great offensive, which crushed Bulgaria, could never have been delivered.

What is true of the Greek Army is also true of



the Greek people. Even in Athens, the stronghold of Royalism, though some may have grieved at the abdication of their King, many more rejoiced at the return of Venizelos fifteen days later. Even if the Great Powers had not intervened, Venizelos is confident that by crossing the Neutral Zone with his Army he could have won over the whole of Greece, almost without bloodshed.

I have stated the facts which concern the Greek people: from them I think we may make some clear deductions. The vast majority of the people were not in favour of betraying their ally Serbia, but popular opinion in Greece was an extraordinarily weak force. The possession of Athens, the one big town in a country where communications are scanty, and where therefore co-operation between other towns is almost impossible, is the key to the situation. As long as the King was firmly established there, nothing short of a revolution headed by Venizelos could have dislodged him. Thousands resented his tyranny, but they could not combine together to enforce their will. Were a King of England to disregard the wishes of his people, as Constantine did, they would rise up at once and dethrone him. But then England possesses extraordinary facilities of inter-communication for an exchange of plans and ideas, which is denied to Greece, and without which resistance is hazardous, if not impossible.

But more than anything else Greece lacks leadership. Oliver Cromwell defeated Charles I, but it was John

Hampden who paved the way for Oliver Cromwell. Even if we were to compare Venizelos to Cromwell, yet we should be compelled to admit that there are no John Hampdens in Greece—ordinary, simple men who are prepared to stand up for their rights against the might and majesty of the Crown. Without a John Hampden a revolution is an impossibility.

Finally, we must take into consideration the admiration as a man and the reverence as a King with which the Greek people regarded Constantine. If we weigh all these factors carefully and then consider the part which the people actually played, none of us, I think, need despair for the future of the Greek Nation. The famous line of Horace:

*“Quidquid delirant reges, plectuntur Achivi,”*

is as true to-day as it was two thousand years ago. “The Greek people” (if I may be permitted a ‘free’ translation) “are not responsible for the folly of their King.” It is well that we should bear this in mind.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE STATESMANSHIP OF VENIZELOS

**W**E have now studied in detail the policy of Venizelos, and we have seen how eventually, after a hard struggle with the forces of evil, he won the victory; and it is natural for us to ask ourselves what qualities we have found in him to place him head and shoulders above, not only all Greek and Balkan statesmen, but probably even all European statesmen as well. I think there are two things which assure his pre-eminence: his possession of opposite qualities, which do not generally go together, and his 'many-sidedness.' Let me illustrate what I mean.

There are many practical men of affairs in the world, and there are a certain number of idealists. But Venizelos is the only practical idealist. The truth of this is abundantly illustrated by the accusations of his opponents. Sonnino has been accused of being too hard-headed and grasping; President Wilson has been called by many a hopeless idealist, who will not see things as they are, but only as he

wishes them to be. But no one would think of suggesting that Sonnino was an idealist, or that President Wilson was too grasping. It is only Venizelos who almost in the same breath is accused of having sacrificed Greece for an idea, and of having been too grasping in the concessions which he extorted, in return for her co-operation. Thus he may be said to see with the eyes of Sonnino through the rose-tinted glasses of President Wilson.

Take again his transparent honesty and his amazing shrewdness. There are a number of shrewd politicians in Europe, but they are generally not too scrupulous. And there are a number of transparently honest politicians, but they are, as a rule, transparently stupid as well. (One has not to look abroad to find examples of this.) But Venizelos is as honest as he is shrewd. He did not rush blindly to our side, but he weighed carefully every consideration and every factor in the European situation; and finally he came to the long-sighted conclusion that the Entente were bound to win, and that Greece must in her own interests come to our assistance. Having once made the decision, he never looked back, but remained consistently true to the promise which he had made. Had he been less scrupulous, had he been an opportunist, he would have given himself a loophole, by which he might escape in the event of disaster. But loopholes were alien to his nature, and during the many vicissitudes of fortune, during those terrible days when the best of us had doubts

of the issue, he never doubted for an instant, but remained our steadfast friend and ally.

His other claim to pre-eminence among the men of his time is what I have called his 'many-sidedness.' I think I can best illustrate my meaning by comparing him with Alfred the Great. A favourite question in the 'Honours' School of History at Oxford is: "Did Alfred deserve the title of 'Great'?" The answer which one is expected to give is this: that it is not because Alfred excelled his contemporaries in any one particular branch of kingship, but because he was proficient in so many, and because his character and accomplishments were so many-sided, that he deserves this title. Alfred designed a new model for English ships, but he was not the founder of the English Navy; and, indeed, he admits himself that his ships had a habit of 'lying aground most uncomfortably.' He also reorganized the English Army and defeated the Danes, but the Danes had been defeated before, and they had to be defeated again after his death. He wrote Latin fluently, but any sixth-form public-school boy could detect greivous 'howlers' in his translations. He made many inventions, but he cannot be included among the 47,000 inventors of the Tanks. Thus in everything that he did we can detect shortcomings, and there is no particular action on which we can lay a finger and say: "Alfred did this, and therefore deserves the title of 'Great.'" Rather we should say: "Because he was and did and wrote so many things, because

Alfred was Alfred, he deserves this title." It is for this very same reason that Venizelos deserves to be called 'Great.' There is no single quality of his on which we can lay a finger and say 'Venizelos is great, because he is more honest, or more far-sighted, or more patriotic than any other European statesman," for this would not be true. It is in his ability to combine all these qualities, which, though admirable in themselves, are not sufficient singly to complete the equipment of a statesman, that his true greatness lies.

Let us turn now for a moment to his treatment of the man who wronged him so cruelly, for in his dealings with Constantine his strength and his weakness are clearly revealed. From the very first we see his absolute loyalty and the absence of any personal ambitions. Before his accession to the throne Constantine had been extraordinarily unpopular in Greece, and was actually compelled to leave the country and live abroad for a while. But Venizelos does everything in his power to restore the love of the people to their Prince. He turns the limelight on to Constantine: he gives him, as the Chief of Staff, every credit for the triumphs of the Army; after each success, whether in the field or in politics, he encourages the people to award the palm to their King. For himself, he is content to remain in the background, to hide in the shadow; he only asks that he may be allowed to guide his countrymen's footsteps in the right direction. It is true that he

is ambitious for Greece ; but how unpersonal is his ambition we see clearly from his hatred of any personal demonstration from his supporters. Let him only sow the seeds of victory, and the King may reap the rich harvest of glory.

Then comes the Greater War, and before long it becomes plain that the King and he do not see eye to eye. But it never occurs to him for a moment that the King is animated by any other desire than that of Greece's welfare. It never occurs to him that the King may be pursuing a selfish, dynastic policy. It never occurs to him that the King is consulting all the time with a traitor in the Ministry. The King flatly contradicts his policy at the time of the Mark Kerr incident. But still his loyalty and belief in the King remain unshaken : and it is only later that, after repeated proofs of his treachery, he insists on dismissing Streit.

We see clearly his great weakness : a certain childlike credulity in the good motives of others. This weakness is the defect of his quality of honesty : for, being honest himself, he cannot bring himself to believe in the dishonesty of others, until he has the clearest and most irrefutable proofs. This is no doubt an amiable weakness, but it is a dangerous weakness. For unfortunately murderers do not walk abroad with a label on their backs, "I am a murderer," and unless a man takes the necessary precautions, he will be stabbed in the back before he has time to look round. If only Venizelos had

been a little more a 'man-of-the-world,' if only he had been a little less credulous, he might have removed the King's evil advisers at the very beginning, and Greece would have been spared all the shame which was afterwards heaped on her. But he was too slow to detect the treason; and when at last he acted, the King had been definitely won over, and it was too late.

The Dardanelles crisis brought Greece to the parting of the ways; but still Venizelos, although he knew the King to be in the wrong, persisted obstinately in the belief that he was only mistaken and misguided. He tried by every argument, by every means in his power, to persuade him; and when at last he realized that he had failed, he gave way without a protest. For his faith was still unshaken, and he viewed the King's conduct in the most favourable light. "Of course the King is mistaken. But it is natural that he should be frightened of taking the plunge. We have lost a great opportunity by not intervening at once. But later the King may change his mind, and it may not be too late."

During the six months of his retirement his confidence in the King was rudely shaken. His most secret memoranda were published; he was actually forbidden to land at the Piræus; and everything was done which could discredit him in the eyes of the people. But when he returned to office in August 1915 he still never doubted that, in spite of the King's growing personal animosity towards him,



there would be any question of disputing the validity of the Serbian Treaty.

But the extraordinary difficulties of the task before him soon became apparent to Venizelos. Thanks to the kindness of an exalted personage (whose name it is not desirable for me to give) I have been allowed to publish the words in which Venizelos described the situation in a conversation with one of the Entente Ministers in Athens in September 1, 1915. I quote from the wire afterwards sent by this Minister to his Government reporting the conversation.

"I HAVE BEEN TO SEE M. VENIZELOS, AND I AM REPORTING HIS WORDS AS FAITHFULLY AS POSSIBLE. MY RELATIONS WITH MY KING," SAID THE PRIME MINISTER, "ARE BECOMING MORE AND MORE DIFFICULT. HE PUTS UP WITH ME, BUT HE IS TRYING TO GET RID OF ME. HIS FRIENDS ARE MY BITTEREST ENEMIES. HE BELIEVES IN THE EVENTUAL TRIUMPH OF GERMANY. YESTERDAY AT TATOI I HAD A VERY STORMY CONVERSATION WITH HIM. I TOLD HIM THAT HE JUDGED THE SITUATION EXCLUSIVELY FROM THE MILITARY AND STRICTLY TECHNICAL POINT OF VIEW, WHEREAS I TOOK A MORE LOFTY VIEW, AND I WAS CONVINCED THAT THE WORLD WOULD NEVER ENDURE THE WILL OF A SINGLE NATION AND A SINGLE MAN. I THOUGHT OF WITHDRAWING, THOUGH I KNEW THAT THE KING, WHO CANNOT ENDURE CONSTITUTIONAL CHECKS, WOULD SOON BECOME A KAISER. IT IS REALLY DIFFICULT AND DISCOURAGING TO STRUGGLE AGAINST

AN ADVERSARY WHO HAS ON HIS SIDE THE PRESTIGE OF THE CROWN AND THE POWER OF THE ROYAL PREROGATIVE. BUT I HAVE DECIDED TO REMAIN IN ORDER TO FIGHT GERMANY."

It seems to me that this short conversation illustrates admirably the chief characteristics of Venizelos' policy: his invincible belief in the eventual defeat of Germany; his unceasing endeavours, in spite of the King's open hostility, to persuade him to take a broader and higher view; his diffidence in openly fighting the Crown; and finally his determination, in spite of his personal disinclination, to remain at his post as long as possible in order to defeat the German intrigues.

But the struggle was hopeless. On the 5th of October, only four weeks later, he was dismissed from office. The actual pretext for his dismissal was his reply in the House to the question of the pro-German Theotokes on the previous day: "What if you find German troops barring the way?" he was asked during the debate on the question of assisting Serbia. "I shall fight them," came the unhesitating reply. It appears that the Entente Ministers had begged him not to take part in the debate that day, and not to fall into the trap set for him by the King. But he replied that such an evasion was unworthy of him. Indeed, it would have been as useless as it was unworthy, for the King was now determined to get rid of him, and some other pretext would have been found without difficulty.

After his dismissal, he knew that he had done all that was possible, and that for the present he could do no more. For reasons which it is unnecessary to go into again, he would not and could not lead a revolution yet. So he sat down quietly and waited for better times.

On May 6, 1916, he decided to offer himself for election at Mitylene, where a vacancy had occurred ; but he was careful to say that, in contesting a by-election, he did not thereby admit the legality of the newly elected Chamber. The result of the election proved that the vast majority of the country was still with him, for he obtained 14,768 votes out of a total of 15,253 ! But in spite of this he could do nothing, and things, instead of getting better, got worse.

At length he decided that the only course open to him was to break with the King. But though he broke with him, he did not wish at first to break him. It was not till after the events of December 1st and 2nd that the last ties of loyalty to, and confidence in, his unworthy master were snapped, and that he at length decided that, whatever happened, the King must go. But even then he was faithful to the dynasty. It is an open secret<sup>\*</sup> that when at last the Entente decided to enforce Constantine's abdication, they were anxious to remove the dynasty as well, and to proclaim Venizelos 'First President of the Greck Republic' ; and there can be no doubt that the vast majority of the Greek nation would

\* This " open secret " lacks official confirmation.

have preferred this course. But Venizelos absolutely refused to listen to this, and he rebuked the Entente and his too enthusiastic admirers alike. "Constantine must go, for he has betrayed Greece. But why should his son suffer for the folly of his father? The Crown Prince shares his father's guilt, but his younger sons are only boys, and they can be trained to become worthy Kings of Greece. It is only on condition that you preserve the dynasty that I shall consent to return to Athens."

It is tempting to peep into the future. Will Alexander repay Venizelos for his loyalty and devotion, as his father did? I think we are entitled to hope that he will not. The young King has not displayed any exceptional abilities, but, as the following conversation shows, he has learnt the first lesson of constitutional kingship. Someone asked him recently why he always signed State papers without even looking at them. His reply is striking: "My grandfather never looked at the papers he was signing, and he reigned for fifty years. My father always looked at them—and he only reigned for four!"

If we turn to Venizelos' foreign policy, we see again that curious combination of opposite qualities which is so rare; his determination which goes hand in hand with conciliation. In the Balkans, particularly during the last few years, a strong tendency has shown itself to put forward extreme claims, based on 'ethnographical' or other grounds, on the principle that, if you ask for much, you will probably

get a little ; but if you only ask for the little to which you are justly entitled, you won't get anything at all. We have all heard the phrase, ' the realization of our national aspirations,' until we have grown sick to death of it. " There once lived a Bulgarian King who reigned over all Greece, Serbia and Roumania. Therefore Bulgaria is entitled to all his territory, which has since been stolen from her by Greek, Serbian and Roumanian robbers. However, we aren't greedy, and we are prepared to accept a slice of Macedonia and a slice of the Dobrudja in compensation." To this someone else replies : " Ah ! but your Bulgarian King stole all this territory from our Serbian King, who ruled over practically the whole of Europe. Anyway, your King wasn't a Bulgarian at all "—and so on, and so on. With these preposterous fairy-tales Venizelos has never concerned himself ; he is far too practical and too honest to confuse imaginary with real claims. I am not going into the vexed question of what claims are real and just : it is a matter on which only experts can decide, and (we hope) are deciding at this very moment. But the attitude of Venizelos towards the question is quite straightforward. " You, the Great Powers, have decided that the test shall be the self-determination of the small nations. Very well, I only ask that you should apply this test. Hold a plébiscite in Asia Minor, in Constantinople, in Epirus, and in the Islands. If you find that the majority of the inhabitants prefer to join themselves

to Greece, then let them do so. That is the general principle which should guide you. But please note that if other considerations lead you to suppose that, in spite of the will of the majority, it would be inadvisable in the general interests for certain districts to become attached to Greece, you will find me very reasonable. If, for instance, you say that, in spite of its 400,000 Greeks, Constantinople cannot be handed over to Greece, I am quite prepared to give way. All that I ask is that the Greeks in the town shall not be ill-treated, as they have been under the rule of the Turks."

In the negotiations which preceded and followed the Balkan Wars we see the same spirit of conciliation. He never wished to fight against Turkey, unless it proved absolutely necessary : and eventually, after Greece had more or less settled her difficulties with Turkey, he only fought because Serbia and Bulgaria were determined to go to war. Again, after the first war, he did all he could to prevent a reopening of hostilities. But although he was always conciliatory, he acted on the principal that, "If you want peace, you must prepare for war"; and when Bulgaria proved unreconcilable, he was ready to meet the emergency. At the Treaty of Bucharest he showed that although he was willing to compromise on comparatively unimportant matters, he was determined not to sacrifice any vital interest of Greece. The question of Kavalla is a case in point. He argued firmly that although he had been willing before

the second war to hand over Kavalla to Bulgaria, it was no longer possible to do so, since Bulgaria had shown by her action how voracious she was. "If we give it to her now," he said, "it will not satisfy, but it will encourage, her voracity, and we shall have to fight her again." Subsequent events proved that he was right, and that the sop of Kavalla would never have satisfied the greed of that ambitious and restless country.

It is perhaps inevitable that a giant, dwelling among pigmies, should be rather inclined to take too much on himself: and in this respect, like a great English soldier and administrator, perhaps Venizelos is a little inclined to overtax his strength, by attempting to do all the work himself, and leaving nothing to his subordinates. To give but one example of this, it is known that, at the beginning of the war, he was in the habit of attending to the minutest matters of routine at the Greek Admiralty, and would not allow a single promotion or transfer to take place unless it had received his personal sanction! Too much centralization of authority is bound to impair the general efficiency of any service; and, moreover, by attempting to do too much himself, and by concentrating too much authority in his own hands, Venizelos made it very difficult to give his subordinates that proper training to the management of public affairs which can only be acquired by the delegation of full responsibility and authority.

In the same way, and for the same reason that he

towers above all those who surround him, he is a little too disinclined to follow 'expert' advice, even if it is the advice of a real expert. For instance, when, before the war, the question arose of purchasing two American battleships for Greece, in order to secure for her the naval supremacy against Turkey, Venizelos consulted Admiral Mark Kerr on the advisability of acquiring them. The latter informed him that these battleships were obsolete and quite worthless. He would do much better not to waste money on the purchase of these expensive and useless 'adornments,' but to secure instead several fast destroyers. Venizelos appeared to be convinced, but shortly afterwards he was visited by a deputation of officers from the Fleet, whom he informed of the Admiral's opinion. With one accord they told him that the Greek sailors would never be brought to understand that a small destroyer could put up a fight against a great battleship, and that for the 'moral' of the Fleet the purchase of the American battleships, however useless, was essential. Venizelos, rightly or wrongly, gave way; and a short time afterwards Admiral Mark Kerr, who had heard no more about the matter, was surprised to learn that the sale to Greece of the two American battleships had been effected!

I have tried to give a true picture of the man as he really is, neither concealing his defects nor exaggerating his virtues. But if anyone thinks that I am guilty of hero-worship, let him consider



for a moment what would have been the position of Greece to-day had it not been for him ! The services which he has rendered to his country, and which he is still rendering, are beyond count, and the future of Greece is in his hands. For in a country which, as far as public men are concerned, has a good many liabilities, and indeed may almost be said to be bankrupt, Venizelos is the one great national asset.

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